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OUR LORD CHARGES ST. PETER TO FEED HIS SHEEP.

(Raphael)



LEADING EVENTS IN THE

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

PART I.

WRITTEN FOR
SCHOOLs.
BY THE
**SISTERS OF
NOTRE DAME**

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GULIELMUS CANONICUS GILDEA,
CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

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Dic 30 Martii, 1909.

LEADING EVENTS
IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

PART I
CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITY

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THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

THE CHURCH

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH.

THE Divine Head and Founder of the Church is The Divine
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Head of the
Church.

During thirty years of hidden toil at Nazareth, followed by three years of incessant labours of zeal, closed by His Passion and Death, our Divine Lord showed us the example of a perfect life in the exercise of every virtue. But during the three years of His public ministry He taught us also all the truths of salvation.

He gathered round Him a band of faithful disciples, whom He instructed by constant teaching. From among these our Divine Master chose out twelve Apostles—Peter, Andrew, James, and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James of Alpheus, Thaddeus or Jude, and Simon his brother; also Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him. Our Lord kept the Apostles

always with Him, giving them special teaching, and training them in their sacred duties. He bade them preach the Faith to all nations, and gave them the power of working miracles to prove the truth of their teaching.

He confided to them His own Divine authority, saying: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you."

**Visible Head
on earth.** All the Apostles were consecrated bishops by our Lord Himself, but that they might be united into one body, He chose St. Peter to be their head and chief when He, the Divine Founder of the Church, should have ascended into Heaven. St. Peter was therefore the first Pope, shepherd and teacher of the one flock of Christ. To him our Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and to him He promised infallibility, which means "that the Pope cannot err when, as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church."

**Powers given
to the
Apostles.** But these powers were not to cease with the Apostles. They were to consecrate and appoint other bishops and priests, to whom they were to hand down all the teaching and authority entrusted to them by their Divine Master. They received power to perpetuate the Sacrifice of Calvary by holy Mass, to absolve from sins, and to administer the other Sacraments.

Our Lord Jesus Christ also promised that the Holy Ghost would teach them all truth, and that He Himself would abide for ever with His Church.

All the truths taught by our Lord to His Apostles, and by the Apostles handed down to their successors to this day, constitute Christian Doctrine, the teaching of Christ, or the Catholic Faith.

II. MARKS OF THE CHURCH.

The Society founded by our Blessed Lord is The Church, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

One, because she has one Founder and Head, One, Jesus Christ, the Son of the one, true, living God, represented on earth by His Vicar the Pope, the successor of St. Peter. She teaches the one same Faith, whole and entire, which our Lord gave to His Apostles. She administers the same Sacraments He gave them power to administer.

Holy, because her Founder is God, the Holy ^{Holy}, One Himself; and because, if faithful to her teaching, men cannot fail to become saints.

Catholic, because our Lord said that His ^{Catholic}, Apostles were to teach all nations, that the Church would last through all time to the end of the world, and that the Holy Ghost would teach her all truth.

Apostolic, because our Lord taught His Apostles ^{Apostolic}, the truths which they have handed down to us; and because He gave the Apostles power to ordain other bishops and priests, and to hand on to them the orders and the mission they had received from Him. This *continuity*, or unbroken chain of Apostolic succession, will go on in the Church till the end of time.

III. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

History of
the Church
foretold.

Our Divine Lord foretold to His Apostles that when they carried His Faith abroad into the world many would not receive it, that persecutions would arise, and that among the children of the Church all would not be faithful. But He promised that the powers of evil should never overcome the Church, that, however terrible the struggle was sometimes to be, God would always conquer, and that His Church would be victorious over all her enemies.

What Church History is. Church History is an account of the labours of the Apostles and their successors, by whom the Catholic Faith has been carried into all the world ; of the difficulties they have met with ; of the wicked men who have opposed the Church ; of others who have fallen away ; and of how, in spite of all, the Church has come out victorious from every combat, and ever been the fruitful mother of multitudes of Saints.

A careful study of this will show how often the words of our Lord have been verified—"The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against My Church"; and how much reason we have to say, "The mercies of the Lord have been confirmed upon us, and the truth of the Lord abideth for ever."



CHAPTER I

FIRST PREACHING OF THE FAITH

I. SPREAD OF THE FAITH IN JERUSALEM.

FORTY days after His glorious Resurrection our Lord ascended into Heaven, and was hidden by a bright cloud from the sight of His Apostles. As they stood on Mount Olivet, gazing after their beloved Master, two angels in shining garments came and spoke to them, telling them that as they had seen Him depart, so Jesus would return again. Filled with joy and consolation, they went back to Jerusalem, and assembled round our Blessed Lady in the room which had witnessed the Last Supper and the institution of the Holy Eucharist, there to await the coming of the Holy Ghost.

In that upper room a hundred and twenty persons represented the Church, which was to spread over the whole earth like the mighty tree springing from the grain of mustard-seed. The eleven

Election of
St. Matthias.

Apostles were there as the pastors and teachers of the faithful, but the place of Judas was still vacant. Rising in the midst of the assembly, St. Peter proposed that a man should be chosen to complete the number of the twelve. Barsabas and Matthias were named as equally worthy, and, after prayer, lots were cast, with the result that St. Matthias was added to the Apostolic College (Acts i. 1-26).

Descent of
the Holy
Ghost.

On the tenth day after the Ascension, whilst our Lady and the Apostles and disciples were assembled in prayer, there was a noise as of a mighty wind coming, which filled the whole house, and the Holy Ghost descended upon all present in a visible form of "parted tongues as it were of fire" (Acts ii. 1-4).

First preach-
ing in Jeru-
salem.

At once they were all filled with the Spirit of God, and going out into the city, they began to preach to the people.

It was Pentecost, one of the three great festivals for which the Jews were wont to assemble in Jerusalem from all parts of the world. Crowds gathered round the Apostles, who spoke in their own language with great force and wisdom, but each man heard what they said in his own native speech. This great wonder so struck all the people that they felt that God was with the Apostles, and three thousand were converted at once by St. Peter's sermon, and, being baptized, joined the Church (Acts ii. 5-41).

First miracle
of St. Peter.

The hearts of many more were stirred by grace, and when, a few days afterwards, St. Peter and

St. John, going up into the Temple by the Beautiful Gate, healed a man who had been a cripple from his birth, they came round the Apostles in great numbers. St. Peter preached again, and this time five thousand received the Word of God, and were joined to the body of the faithful (Acts iii., iv.).

As yet the Apostles had met with no opposition, but now the Jewish priests, jealous of such power in words and works, and influenced by the Sadducees, caused SS. Peter and John to be cast into prison. The next day they were brought before the Sanhedrim (Great Council of the Jews for settling religious affairs), and forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus Christ. The Apostles answered by declaring that they must obey God rather than men. They were, however, released through fear of the people, and in spite of the threats which had been uttered against them, they resumed their preaching with fresh zeal.

The life of the first Christians was so holy and perfect that it edified all who saw it, and influenced both Jews and Gentiles even more than the miracles the Apostles worked. The faithful listened attentively to the Word of God, and persevered in prayer, and in the Breaking of Bread, as the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist was then called. They were distinguished for their great virtues, especially piety, brotherly love, and charity to all men. There were no poor among them. The rich sold all their possessions and shared the price with those who had nothing (Acts iv.). This bright

First perse-
cution in
Jerusalem.

Life of first
Christians.

picture was marred by the covetousness of Ananias and Saphira, who brought to the Apostles a part of their profits as if it were the whole, intending to keep the rest for themselves. St. Peter, inspired by the Holy Ghost, exposed their falsehood, and the wretched man and his wife fell down dead, victims to the Divine judgment. This miracle brought a holy fear upon the Christians, and prevented those who had not the necessary good dispositions from joining themselves to the Church (Acts v.).

Second per-
secution in
Jerusalem.

The Apostles continued to work numerous miracles. The sick were brought into the streets in order that, by the shadow of St. Peter passing over them, their diseases might be cured. The number of the faithful increased daily. This aroused afresh the jealousy of the chief priests and of the Sadducees, and all the twelve Apostles were cast into prison. An angel delivered them in the night, and sent them to preach in the Temple. They were instantly seized and brought before the Sanhedrim, where St. Peter boldly confessed Christ. The Jews, unable to resist the power of his words, resolved to put the Apostles to death. But Gamaliel, one of the doctors of the law, said: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught. But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it" (Acts v.). This advice was followed, though the Apostles were scourged, and charged again not to preach Jesus Christ. They departed, rejoicing at having suffered something for His Name, and

continued to teach both in private and in the Temple.

The number of Christians increased so much that the Apostles were no longer able to attend to all their needs. They therefore chose out seven holy men to help them. At first, these deacons, as they were called, only had charge of looking

Institution of
Deacons.



Anderson Photo.

ST. PETER RELEASED FROM PRISON BY AN ANGEL (*page 15.*)
(Raphael.)

after the poor and of distributing alms. A little later on they were allowed to assist the priests at the altar when they were celebrating Holy Mass.

St. Stephen was the first among them. His ^{Martyrdom of St.} _{Stephen,} ^{A.D. 37.} zeal, and the numerous conversions he wrought, caused him to be brought before the High Priest and accused of blasphemy. The Jews listened to

his bold defence of the truth, but when he said he saw the heavens opened above him, and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God, they stopped their ears, rushed upon him, drew him outside the city, and stoned him to death. Foremost among those who put St. Stephen to death was a young man named Saul of Tarsus. He held the garments of the others while they stoned their victim. St. Stephen's last words were a prayer for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"—a prayer which bore fruit later on in the conversion of Saul, who became the great Apostle St. Paul (Acts vi., vii., viii.).

II. SPREAD OF THE FAITH BEYOND JERUSALEM.

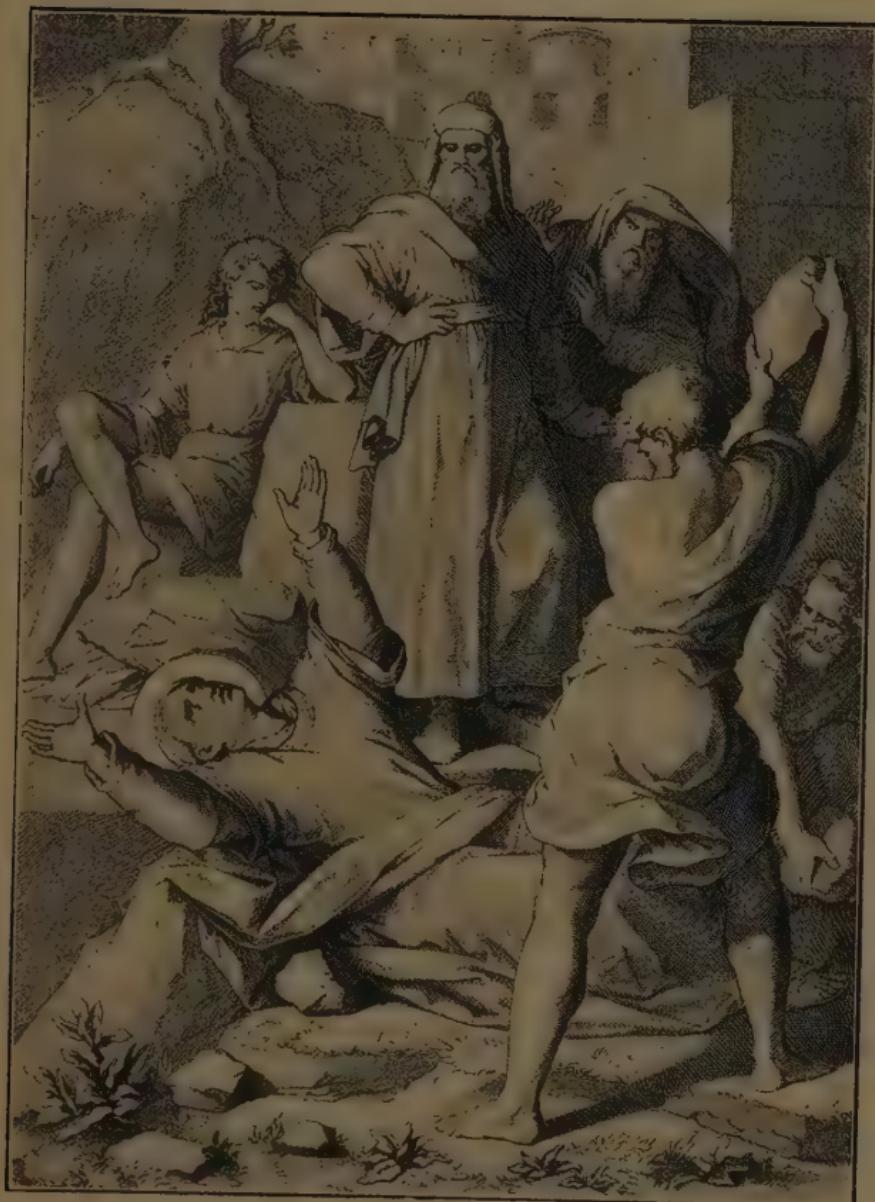
The Gospel
preached in
Judea and
Samaria.

Owing chiefly to the efforts of Saul, the persecutions continued with such force that the faithful, with the exception of the Apostles, were obliged to leave Jerusalem. These disciples travelled throughout Judea and Samaria, carrying the knowledge of the Gospel to the Jewish population of those countries.

Philip the Deacon laboured chiefly in Samaria. His preaching was eagerly listened to by the people, who brought their sick and infirm to be healed. Many were baptized, and SS. Peter and John went down from Jerusalem to confirm them.

Simon
Magus.

One of the recent converts, a magician named Simon Magus, seeing that the Holy Ghost descended upon the faithful at the imposition of hands, offered money to the Apostles to purchase



MARTYRDOM OF ST. STEPHEN.

for himself the power of giving the Holy Ghost. St. Peter rebuked him for thinking that the gift of God could be procured with money. The sin of buying or selling spiritual gifts has ever since been known as Simony (*Acts viii. 9-24*).

Conversion
of the
Ethiopian.

About this time an angel had told Philip the Deacon to go from Samaria into the desert south of Jerusalem. There he met an Ethiopian officer returning from the Pasch.

The Spirit of God inspired Philip to join company with him, and explain to him the passage of Scripture he was reading. His words made so great an impression on the man that he begged to be baptized. Then Philip said, "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest," and he answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

There was a stream by the roadside, and they both got down from the chariot and entered the water. Philip baptized the officer, and immediately after this the Spirit of God took Philip away, and the Ethiopian, rejoicing in his new faith, continued his journey alone. Philip was carried to Azotus, whence he travelled to Cæsarea, preaching the Gospel on his way (*Acts. viii. 27-40*).

Conversion
of St. Paul,
A.D. 37.

About the time when these events were happening in Samaria, St. Paul was miraculously converted on his way to Damascus, A.D. 37. He soon after went to Jerusalem, where St. Peter received him into the number of the Apostles.

The Church
enjoys peace.

At this time, Caligula, who had succeeded Tiberius as Emperor of Rome, treated the Jews

with great tyranny because they would not consent to put up a golden statue to him in the Temple of Jerusalem. The Jews were so engaged in resisting the Imperial will that they had no time to persecute the Christians. Hence, throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria the Churches enjoyed peace (Acts ix. 31).

This gave St. Peter an opportunity of making an Apostolic visitation of the Churches, and thus exercising his right of headship over the whole Church. Some incidents of this journey are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

At Lydda, the miraculous cure of a man sick of the palsy caused the conversion of all the people of that city and of Saron.

At Joppa, St. Peter raised a widow named Dorcas to life. This converted many, and the Apostle stayed a few days instructing the newly-baptized Christians.

It was during this time that St. Peter had the vision of clean and unclean animals being let down in a sheet, while a voice was heard saying, "Kill and eat." By this the Apostle understood from God that he was to receive the Gentiles into the Church.

The same evening three men arrived, sent by Cornelius, a Roman centurion, begging the Apostle to come and instruct him.

Accordingly St. Peter set out for Cæsarea, where Cornelius and his companions were waiting to receive him. After he had instructed them, the Holy Ghost came down upon the Gentiles, and

St. Peter's
first journey
and visitation
of Churches.

St. Peter's
vision.

First Gentile
convert,
A.D. 38.

Foundation
of the Church
at Antioch.

they praised God in various tongues. Seeing in this a proof that God willed the reception of Gentile converts into the Church, St. Peter immediately baptized them, and made them partakers of all the privileges of the Faith (Acts x.). Most ancient historians tell us that after this St. Peter travelled through Syria, and visited Antioch, where he fixed his See. This fact is commemorated in the Church by the feast of "St. Peter's Chair at



Chair of St. Peter

Antioch." He afterwards returned to Jerusalem through Pontus and Galatia.

The Jews of Antioch had been converted to the Faith before the visitation of St. Peter. The Gospel was carried to them by the disciples who had been scattered throughout Syria and the East by the persecutions in Samaria. When the Mother Church in Jerusalem heard of the number of converts at Antioch, St. Barnabas was sent to

confirm them. He was joined by St. Paul, and they laboured together during one year. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians (Acts xi.).

From quite the earliest times, the greatest union and charity were kept up among the Christians. Thus, when a famine broke out in Palestine, and the faithful there were in great want, those in Antioch, where there was no distress at that time, made rich offerings, which St. Paul and St. Barnabas carried to their suffering brethren in Jerusalem.

Caligula was succeeded by Claudius, A.D. 40. One of the new Emperor's first acts was to make Herod Agrippa King of Judea. This prince stopped the persecution against the Jews, and sought to find favour with them by turning against the Christians. St. James the Greater suffered martyrdom by the sword. His heroic example converted his jailor, who begged St. James to forgive him. The Apostle embraced him, saying, "Peace be to thee," and both were beheaded together. Agrippa also imprisoned St. Peter, meaning to execute him, but, in answer to the prayers of the Church, the Apostle was released by an angel (Acts xii.).

This persecution caused the Apostles to disperse, and was the means of their preaching the Gospel to "the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8), according to the last instructions of our Lord.

There is a tradition that, in order to "hold the form of sound words" throughout all the different

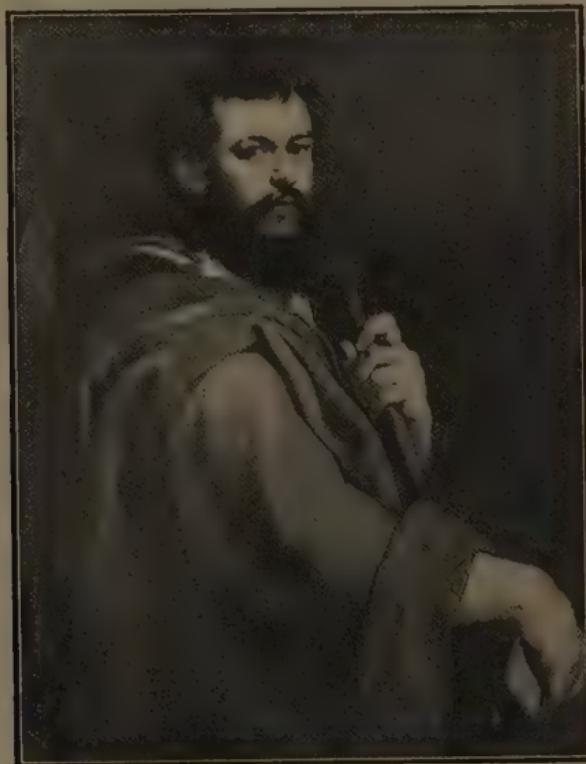
Union among
early
Christians.

Renewal of
persecution,
A.D. 40.

Dispersion of
the Apostles.

Apostles'
Creed.

nations to whom they were going to preach, the Apostles before separating drew up in a short symbol the chief doctrines of the Church. This is known to us as the "Apostles' Creed."



Anderson Photo.

ST. JAMES THE GREATER.
(Rubens.)

III. THE LABOURS OF THE APOSTLES.

His Primacy. ST. PETER.—It is evident from what has already been said of St. Peter that from the first he was always looked upon as the chief of the

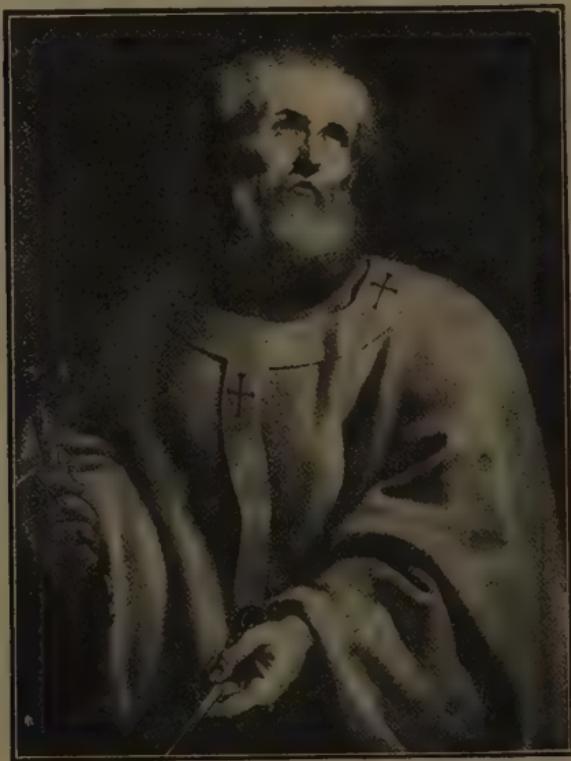
Apostles and the head of the Church. After the Ascension of our Lord, it was St. Peter who proposed the election of St. Matthias ; it was he who delivered the first public sermon after the coming of the Holy Ghost ; he who worked the first miracle by curing the lame man before the Beautiful Gate. It was St. Peter, again, who answered the Jews in the Sanhedrim, who condemned Ananias and Saphira, and who received the first Gentile convert, Cornelius, into the Church. He presided at the Council of Jerusalem, and was the first to make a visitation of the Churches founded by the other Apostles. We see him everywhere acting as the shepherd both of the sheep and of the lambs of the flock of Christ.

St. Peter's first work was the foundation of the His labours. Church in Jerusalem, and in the neighbouring provinces of Judea. He and St. John were twice cast into prison by the Jews. The second time they were released by an angel, but, the persecution continuing, they were obliged to leave Jerusalem. St. Peter's mission was principally to the Jews, whom he evangelized throughout Syria, though he did not shut out the Gentiles from his sermons. After fixing his See at Antioch, St. Peter, with St. Mark as his companion and evangelist, preached throughout Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia.

He transferred his bishopric to Rome, the capital of the pagan world, whence he continued to govern the Church for twenty-five years. He

Bishop of
Rome,
A.D. 42.

probably went there after his miraculous release from prison. St. Peter did not, however, always live in Rome. Thus, we know that he was in Jerusalem in A.D. 50-51, when he went there to



Anderson Photo.

ST. PETER.

(*Rubens.*)

preside at the Council at which all the Apostles were present.

When the persecution under Nero broke out, the faithful implored St. Peter to leave Rome. He did so, but on his way he had a vision of our

Martyrdom
during first
general per-
secution.

Lord bearing His Cross as though going to be crucified again. St. Peter remembered our Lord's prophecy, "When thou wast young, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk whither thou wouldest ; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldest not" (St. John xxi. 18), and understood that it was now to be fulfilled. He returned to the city, where he was



THE MAMERTINE PRISON.

cast into the Mamertine prison with St. Paul. They converted SS. Processus and Martinian, captains of the guard, and forty-seven others. After eight months' imprisonment, St. Peter was martyred, near Nero's palace on the Vatican Hill, by being crucified with his head downwards, A.D. 67. He was buried near the same spot over which the Church of St. Peter now stands.

ST. PAUL.—Foremost among the early persecutors of the Church was a young Pharisee called His conversion, A.D. 37.

Saul of Tarsus. Having procured letters authorizing his persecutions, Saul was on his way to Damascus, when suddenly a bright light appearing in the heavens struck him and his company to the earth. At the same time a voice was heard saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou Me?" And to Saul's question, "Who art Thou, Lord?" it replied, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutes." Then Saul cried out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" to which the answer came, "Arise, go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do." Though struck blind, he obeyed, and spent three days in fasting and prayer. In the meantime, God sent a vision to Ananias, a disciple in Damascus, and told him to go to Saul and cure his blindness. As soon as Ananias had laid his hands on him, the scales fell from the eyes of Saul, who, rising up, was instructed and baptized.

Saul, better known to us as St. Paul, very soon began to preach the word of God in the synagogues, to the astonishment of all who heard him, and who knew how bitterly he had persecuted the Christians but a short time before. This change in St. Paul and the number of converts he made angered the Jews against him, so that he was obliged to leave Damascus for Jerusalem. There he was received into the number of the Apostles. The Jews, however, continued to persecute him, so that he left Jerusalem and went to Cæsarea and Tarsus, and St. Barnabas brought him afterwards to Antioch.

St. Paul devoted himself to the conversion of His labours, the Gentiles, of whom the first had been received into the Church by St. Peter in the person of Cornelius. St. Paul's travels can be divided into three great missions.

On his first mission he was accompanied by St. Barnabas. They preached in Cyprus and the south of Asia Minor, returning to Antioch, and from thence to Jerusalem for the Council held there, A.D. 50.

About the year A.D. 52, St. Paul started with Silas, and preached the Gospel in Syria and nearly all the countries in Asia Minor. At Lystra he took St. Timothy as his disciple, and at Troas he was joined by St. Luke, who became his chronicler and evangelist. St. Paul afterwards crossed to Macedonia, but was driven from Thessalonica by persecution. At Athens he preached in the Areopagus the knowledge of the "Unknown God," adored by the Greeks. After visiting Corinth, St. Paul returned to Antioch (A.D. 54) by Ephesus, Cæsarea, and Jerusalem.

The third mission was undertaken by St. Paul in order to revisit the Churches he had founded in Asia Minor. Driven out of Ephesus, he continued his work in Macedonia and Achaia, whence he returned to Jerusalem.

There he was immediately arrested, but he claimed his rights as a Roman citizen, and so was sent to Rome to be judged, A.D. 61. Here he was kept a captive for two years, though allowed to preach freely. Some say that St. Paul, after he



Neurdein Frères Photo.

ST. PAUL PREPARING TO BURN THE MAGICIANS' BOOKS AT
EPHESUS (*Acts xix. 19*).
(Le Sueur.)

was set at liberty, visited Spain, and preached in the churches of Italy. It is certain that he was in Rome in A.D. 65, for he was then arrested and thrown into prison by Nero. St. Paul was martyred on the same day as St. Peter by being beheaded. His martyrdom took place outside Rome, where the church of the Three Fountains now stands. St. Paul wrote numerous letters to His Epistles, the Churches he had founded. Fourteen have come down to us, and are known as his Epistles.

ST. JOHN.—St. John, the beloved disciple, first laboured in Palestine. When obliged to leave Jerusalem because of the persecutions of the Jews, he went to Parthia, where he stayed many years. St. John was present at the Council of Jerusalem, A.D. 50, and afterwards preached in Asia Minor, making Ephesus his cathedral city (probably about A.D. 63).

During the second persecution, St. John was taken prisoner and sent to Rome (about A.D. 95). There, outside the Latin Gate, he was thrown into a cauldron of burning oil, but being miraculously preserved, was banished to the island of Patmos. Here he had those wonderful revelations which he has left us in the Apocalypse. On the death of Domitian, St. John returned to Ephesus, A.D. 97, where he remained till his death. He probably wrote his Gospel then, and also his two Epistles to refute the heresies of the Cerinthians and Ebionites against the Divinity of Christ. During the last years of his life, St. John's constant sermon was, "Little children, love one another." When

Missionary labours.

asked why it was always the same, he said that it was our Blessed Lord's own command to His disciples. It is a tradition that he lived to be a hundred years old.



Hanfstaengl Photo.

ST. JOHN.
(*Carlo Dolci.*)

ST. JAMES THE GREATER.—Little is known of St. James after the Ascension of our Lord. He was the first of the Apostles to receive the crown of martyrdom, being beheaded by King Agrippa, A.D. 44. He preached in Palestine and the sur-

rounding countries. There is a tradition that St. James visited Spain, but this is not certain, though he is honoured as the patron Saint of that country, and his body is still kept with veneration in the church at Compostella.

ST. ANDREW.—St. Andrew preached in Scythia (which corresponds to modern Russia in Europe and Asia) and Greece. He was martyred by crucifixion at Patræ, in Greece. In A.D. 357 his body was brought to Constantinople, but was removed in A.D. 1210 to Amalfi, where it still remains.

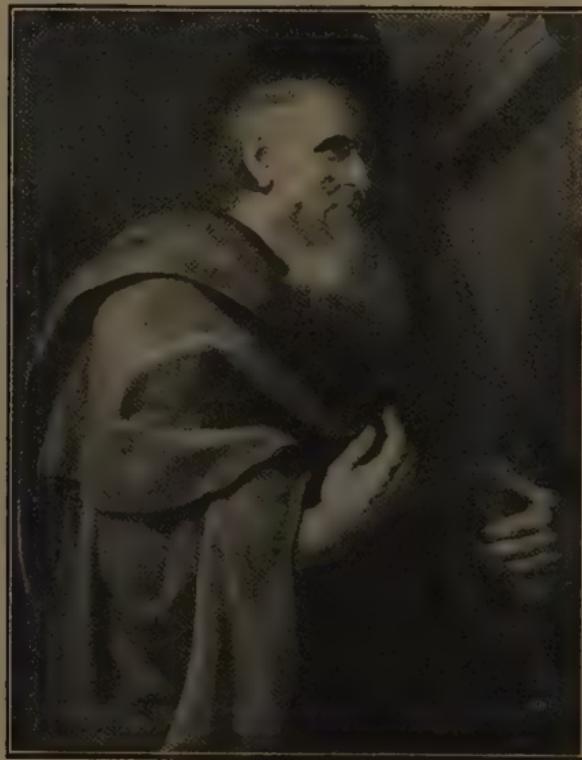
ST. MATTHEW.—After the dispersion of the Apostles, St. Matthew preached the Gospel in the East among the Persians, Ethiopians, and Parthians. He was martyred at Nandabar in Parthia. Before St. Matthew left Jerusalem, he wrote for the Jewish converts the first of the four Gospels.

ST. JAMES THE LESS.—St. James the Less was a near relation of our Lord, and was commonly known as “the Just.” He was made Bishop of Jerusalem soon after the Ascension, and continued to govern this See until his martyrdom in A.D. 63. He was put to death by stoning. St. James wrote one Epistle, addressed to all the Jews scattered throughout the known world.

ST. THOMAS.—Little is known about the labours of the other Apostles. St. Thomas preached in Parthia, India, Media, and Persia. There is a tradition that he baptized the Three Kings. He was martyred near Madras, in India.

ST. PHILIP.—St. Philip, who was crucified at Hieropolis, laboured in Phrygia and Scythia.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.—St. Bartholomew spread the Gospel in India, Arabia, Assyria, and Armenia.



Anderson Photo.

ST. PHILIP.
(*Rubens.*)

He was crucified and flayed alive at Albanopolis, in Armenia.

St. SIMON THE ZEALOT.—St. Simon the Zealot is said to have preached in North Africa. He afterwards went to Persia, where he was martyred.

ST. JUDE.—St. Jude, known by the name of Thaddeus, laboured in Samaria, Idumea, and Syria. He travelled through Mesopotamia towards the end of his life, and visited Persia, where he was martyred. He wrote an Epistle to the Churches of the East, which is often called the “Catholic Epistle.”

ST. MATTHIAS.—St. Matthias, who was elected to supply the place of Judas, preached the Gospel in Ethiopia. The place of his martyrdom is not known.





CHAPTER II

DECAY OF JUDAISM AND SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

I. HISTORY OF THE JEWS TO A.D. 66.

The Jews
persecute the
Christians.

DURING the forty years after the death of our Lord, every time their Roman masters gave them the chance, the Jews renewed their persecutions of the Christians. Thus we have seen that they put St. Stephen to death ; that, until God called him to be an Apostle and a Saint, Saul had treated them with great cruelty for nearly six years ; that Herod Agrippa had caused St. James the Greater to be beheaded and St. Peter to be imprisoned ; and lastly, that when there was no Roman Governor in Jerusalem, Ananias, the High Priest, took the opportunity of beginning a fierce persecution, during which St. James the Less, Bishop of Jerusalem, was martyred.

Romans
persecute the
Jews.

But the Jews themselves had not been in peace. The Roman Emperor, Caligula, was not satisfied

with being honoured as a ruler, he wanted to be worshipped as a god. He had statues of himself put up in the Pagan temples all over the Empire, and wished to erect one in the Jewish Temple also. But the Jews would not have it, and all through his reign they had so much to suffer in consequence, that they often left the Christians in peace. Great troubles also befell the Jews in other parts of the world. In Palestine robbers wandered unpunished throughout the land. The Roman Governors all treated the people with the utmost cruelty. At last an awful day came when the punishment foretold by our Lord overtook the guilty nation. During seven years a poor countryman went about the streets of Jerusalem crying out, "Woe to Jerusalem, woe to the Temple!" He was scourged and ill treated, but all in vain: he still repeated his threatening wail. During the terrible days of the siege he redoubled his cries. One day, just before Jerusalem fell, he was heard to exclaim, "Woe to myself!" when a stone struck him and he fell dead. As the time of the destruction of Jerusalem drew near, mysterious signs and lights terrified the people.

Forebodings
of evil.

II. FALL OF JERUSALEM.

According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, what led to this is how the end came about. The Jews in Jerusalem rose against their harsh Roman rulers, and massacred great numbers of soldiers. A terrible revenge was taken by the Romans, and the

whole country was filled with warfare and bloodshed. An army marched towards Jerusalem, but was driven back. The Christians withdrew as our Lord had told them to do, when He said that when they should see "the abomination of desolation" foretold by Daniel, they should "flee to the mountains." They took refuge in Pella, a little town beyond the Jordan. A still larger army commanded by Vespasian and his son Titus was sent against Palestine, and gradually advanced on Jerusalem, capturing all cities on their route. Instead of uniting against their enemy, the Jews fought among themselves. For two years three various parties struggled for the mastery. They ravaged the country around Jerusalem, and inside the city pillaged and destroyed all they could lay hands on. Famine overtook the town just as the Romans, under Titus, arrived in great numbers to begin the siege.

The siege.

Jerusalem stands on the summit of a table-land, separated by deep valleys from the hill country around. Titus pitched his tents on the slopes of the heights facing the city. The attack was made on three sides at once, and continued night and day. The Jews fought so desperately that the Romans were at first driven back. Titus offered terms of peace, which were rejected. He then drew his army so closely round the city that none could enter or leave it without being caught by the Romans. In doing this Titus unconsciously fulfilled exactly the words of our Lord, "And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed about

with an army, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand" (Luke xxi. 20). To terrify them into submission, Titus ordered that all the Jews captured should be crucified outside the walls of the town. Hundreds at a time were thus put to death. Then he built a strong wall all round the place. Inside the city, the strife among the defenders went on. At the time when the siege began, the crowds who had assembled for the Pasch were still within the walls. All this multitude had nothing to eat. Anything that could serve as food, however disgusting, was eagerly devoured. Parents and children fought over the scraps they managed to secure. The most horrible thing of all was that a mother killed and ate her own child.

But in spite of all, the daily sacrifices in the Temple went on, until the Romans after nearly five months' siege succeeded in capturing the fort called Antonia, that overlooked the courts of the Temple. Thousands then took refuge in the Temple itself, and still fought bravely to defend it. Titus gave orders that this glorious building should be spared, but a soldier threw into the interior a flaming brand, which at once set the whole on fire. Nothing could save the Temple, which was thus destroyed on the very anniversary of its destruction by Nabuchodonosor, nearly seven hundred years before. Jerusalem was now in the hands of the Romans. A terrible massacre followed. Men, women, and children were slain in thousands.

It is thought that altogether nearly a million persons perished during the siege. All who re-

The Romans gain the Temple fortress.

The Temple destroyed, A.D. 70.

Fate of the Jews.

mained alive were sold as slaves. Gold and silver melted by the fierce heat of the flames were found in large quantities among the ruins. This, with all the spoil they could save, was carried off by the Romans.

Fate of
Jerusalem.

The city was levelled to the ground as our Blessed Lord had foretold. The space occupied by the Temple was ploughed up, and then strewn with salt, that nothing might grow on it again. All that remained of the once splendid city was a small portion of a boundary wall with three fortresses. These were left to show what a mighty stronghold had been overthrown by Roman arms. The conqueror, Titus, went to Rome, and with his father, Vespasian, now Emperor, enjoyed a triumph. In the procession the Jewish leaders walked in chains, and immediately after were put to death. An arch was erected to record the conquest of Palestine. On it may still be seen cut in the stone the altar of shewbread and the seven-branched candlestick that Titus carried off. Even when the city was partially rebuilt, the Jews were forbidden to return to Jerusalem. The Christians, however, found their way back again. They kept up the memory of the sites of the holy places, and handed down to their descendants the traditions preserved to this day.

Dispersion of the Jews. From that day to this the Jews have had no sovereign, no Temple, and no nation. They are found scattered through every land. Thus we see how point by point was fulfilled our Lord's prophecy about the destruction and desertion of Jerusalem,

when He wept over the city and said, “For the days shall come upon thee : and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side ; and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone” (St. Luke xix. 43-44).

III. SPREAD OF THE FAITH.

In following the history of the Apostles, we have seen that they went far and wide, preaching the Faith to Jew and Gentile.

ASIA.—All the Apostles, except St. Peter and St. Paul, St. Andrew and St. Simon, remained in Asia. Asia Minor, Arabia, Syria, Parthia, Judea—that is, all the important countries of the East—were visited by them.

AFRICA.—It is not known who founded the Church in Africa, but it is certain that St. Mark the Evangelist was the first Bishop of the magnificent city of Alexandria in Egypt. The faith Egypt spread rapidly, and soon all the North of Africa North Africa was filled with Christians. We shall see in the history of the persecutions how many brave African martyrs suffered for their religion. Not two hundred years after the first preaching, there were seventy or eighty bishops in the land.

EUROPE.—It was to St. Peter and St. Paul that Italy, Rome owed the faith. St. Paul preached in that Balkan part of Europe we now call the Balkan Peninsula, Peninsula ; Greece, and in Greece.

Russia.

Spain.

Gaul or
France.

Britain.

The work of
the Apostles
carried on
by their
successors.

South Russia was evangelized by St. Andrew. The Spaniards claim St. James the Greater as their first Apostle, but it is not quite certain that he was so. All that is known is that the Church in Spain is one of the oldest in Europe. St. James is the patron of the country, and his shrine at Compostella is a famous place of pilgrimage.

Old traditions tell us that some years after the Ascension of our Divine Lord, when the Christians dispersed on account of the persecution in Palestine, Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary Magdalen, went to the South of France, that Lazarus became first Bishop of Marseilles, and that St. Mary Magdalen lived and died in a cavern near the city. Other holy disciples of our Lord preached in France, and some say that St. Luke, and St. Paul's convert, St. Dionysius the Areopagite, were among them.

But some of these brave missionaries went further still. Old stories tell us that St. Peter came to our island, but they probably mean that the faith of St. Peter was brought to our forefathers. St. Joseph of Arimathea is supposed to have preached to the Britons near Glastonbury, in Somerset. It is quite certain that Britain was very early converted to the faith.

Besides these first teachers, there were many others who continued their work of converting the nations. The faith spread so fast that St. Paul says it was spoken of in the whole world (Rom. i. 8). Besides this, many writers, both Christian and pagan, speak of the multitudes of Christians who

were to be found everywhere. We can see how true this was when we come to read the story of the martyrs, who belonged to every nation, and who died in thousands for the faith. When St. Ignatius of Antioch was sent to Rome to be put to death, he was greeted at every place where he stopped by troops of Christians, headed by their bishops and priests. In the Catacombs of Rome there are innumerable tombs, all of Christians buried during the first four centuries.

IV. OBSTACLES TO THE SPREAD OF THE FAITH.

But we must not suppose that these conversions were wrought without any difficulty. Our Blessed Lord had warned His Apostles and their successors that they and those who should embrace His Divine teaching would have much to suffer for His name, and that they would be persecuted by even their nearest and dearest. The first Christians had difficulties of every kind to meet—sufferings for their mind and heart, and sufferings for their body also.

The world was very wicked when the Apostles (1) From the began their preaching. The pagans lived only ^{wickedness of} _{the world.} for pleasure. The rich had magnificent palaces, splendid furniture, luxurious food and garments. They spent fortunes over great public games and shows, while nothing whatever was done for the poor and the unfortunate. There were immense numbers of slaves in each household ; the masters

and mistresses could do just as they liked with them—beat, or starve, or even kill them if they willed—and no one had a right to gainsay them.

The Christians did the contrary to all this: they imitated our Blessed Lord, who became poor for us; they helped all those who were suffering from poverty and want; they lived mortified lives, practising fasting and abstinence, and they busied themselves with all kinds of useful work. This brought down on them the mockery and insults of their former friends. Besides this, they were accused unjustly of shocking crimes.

(2) From the pagans.

The pagans worshipped numerous gods and goddesses, many of whom were only vices represented as people, and they did many evil acts in honour of their false gods.

Christians forsook the temples, no longer offered sacrifices in honour of the emperors, no longer joined in the wicked festivals. This brought down on them the anger of both rulers and priests. The former accused the Christians of being traitors to the State—that is, of being unfaithful to their sovereigns—and the latter of attacking the national gods, and of introducing new worship. It was true that the Christians would have nothing to do with the old heathen gods and their false worship, for they adored the one true living God with the purest and holiest of worship; but it is not true that they were bad subjects, for whenever the Empire was at war, Christians were found fighting bravely in every army, and more than one victory was gained by their prayers.

The Jews, too, everywhere opposed the Christians. These people were to be found in every important town. They had built synagogues everywhere. Great liberty was allowed them for their religious practices by the Romans, who needed the money and the help they could get from the wealthy Jews. Now, these Jews taught that their religion was the true one, and they put every difficulty they could in the way of the spread of the Gospel. Their wonderful Temple at Jerusalem, too, was for a time a great obstacle, because it had been considered for so many ages as the one sanctuary of the true God. But we have seen how God permitted this to be destroyed, and the power of Judaism to be overthrown.

At last, when every other means had been tried, the pagan rulers began to put the Christians to death, if they would not give up their faith. During three hundred years thousands of martyrs died rather than deny their religion.

V. AIDS TO THE SPREAD OF THE FAITH.

But so far from putting an end to Christianity, the persecution seemed to cause multitudes to imitate the glorious courage of those who preferred to give up land, home, and kindred, and even life itself, rather than be untrue to their God. The religion of the Christians was seen by the better kind of pagans to be a pure one. The holy lives of these noble followers of our Lord made them ashamed of their heathen wickedness, so that, as

(3) From the
Jews.

(4) From
persecutions.

(1) Noble
lives of
Christians.

Tertullian truthfully said: "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church."

(2) Miracles. Moreover, God gave the Christians power to work great miracles. Often the pagans did all they could to hurt a brave martyr without succeeding in causing him the least pain. They saw the dead raised to life, incurable diseases healed, and they knew man could not do such deeds. They felt that God must be with these men and women, and, yielding to grace, many were converted. Thus, in spite of all that men and devils could do to stop it, God made His Church to spread all over the inhabited world. When the first three hundred years were over, it was the persecutors who were worsted, and not the Christians, for Christ had said of His Church that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."



THE SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDLESTICK
FROM ARCH OF TITUS, ROME.



S^T CECILIA V M

CHAPTER III

THE PERSECUTIONS

I. THE CATACOMBS.

IN reading the stories of the martyrs we shall often see the Catacombs mentioned. So much are they mixed up with the early history of the Church that it is important we should know something about them.

Description of the Catacombs.

Stretching out from Rome in all directions are still to be seen the old paved roads made by the Romans, some of them dating back quite to the earliest days of the city.

Near almost all of these roads, but outside the Entrances. walls of the city, there are openings leading down by stairs into underground galleries, dark, narrow, and intricate. Some of these give entrance into

little rooms which, like the galleries, have niches cut into their walls. Niches, galleries, and rooms are all dug out of the solid rock ; only where it is soft and crumbling are there to be seen remains of brickwork keeping up the roof.

Galleries.

Passing through gallery after gallery, we may come to a staircase, and, going down, we shall find, on a lower level underneath the former, a new set of passages and chambers.

Air shafts.

Here and there a long, narrow opening to the surface above lets in light and air, otherwise all is dark and gloomy. Perhaps we shall find another staircase leading lower down, and still another, for in some places there are four or even five sets of galleries, one below the other. But everywhere in the walls of both passages and rooms are the same long, low, narrow niches cut back into the rock. Sometimes they are open and empty ; sometimes bones may be seen in them ; sometimes they are closed with a slab, on which a little bird with an olive-branch, or an inscription, or a cross, may be made out.

Tombs.

Some of the rooms have one large tomb, with an arch over it, let into the wall at the end, and round the walls there are stone benches. These chambers are often decorated, paintings and inscriptions covering the walls and ceilings. Most of the decorations have a hidden meaning, representing symbolically the great mysteries of religion, and proving that the faith of the early Christians was identical with our own.

Chambers.
Altar-tomb.

History of the Catacombs.

These wonderful underground dwellings of the dead are the Catacombs. There are so many of them that if all the galleries were put in one straight line, they would reach from one end of Italy to the other. They were almost all made by the Christians of Rome during the days of persecution.

At first they were used only to bury the dead, ^{Used—} for the niches are all graves, some of martyrs, the others of those who did not die for the faith, but wished to be buried near those who had. Some families made a room for themselves as a family vault, or in honour of some important martyr. But later on, when it was not safe for the faithful ^{(1) For burial.} to meet for Holy Mass in the houses of the richer Christians, as they had at first done, they made the little rooms larger and used them as churches. As all the Romans were very careful about burial, and had laws protecting cemeteries, the Christians were at first quite safe in the Catacombs.

But we shall see, as time went on, that even here they were discovered and put to death, and that the faithful were forbidden to go to the Catacombs again, while the openings to them were sometimes walled up.

When the persecutions were over, burials still went on for nearly a hundred years. Gradually, however, this was given up, but people still went down as to a place of pilgrimage.

During the barbarian invasions from the fifth to

Made during persecutions.

⁽²⁾ As churches.

Catacombs closed.

Places of pilgrimage.

After the
persecutions
Catacombs
forgotten.

Redis-
covered.

Open again
to the
faithful.

the ninth centuries, the bodies of the Saints were removed to the churches above ground, and little by little the Catacombs were forgotten.

For six hundred years only an occasional pilgrim visited the neglected Catacombs, but at length in the sixteenth century they were discovered anew. Little was done except to destroy what was found, until, nearer our own days, they have been opened up again and carefully examined. The chambers and galleries have been cleared of the rubbish that had accumulated during ages of neglect.

Staircases have been made or repaired, and now anyone who wishes may go down to pray on the very spot where the Saints and martyrs of old heard Holy Mass and received Holy Communion, and so strengthened themselves for the hard combat awaiting them before they could attain the crown of everlasting life.

II. THE FIRST FOUR PERSECUTIONS.

During the first three centuries it rarely happened that the Church was free from persecution, but when we speak of the ten general persecutions we mean those periods when the laws against Christians were more severe, and when greater numbers suffered for the faith.

*First Persecution, A.D. 64-68.**

Under Nero,
A.D. 54-68.

Nero had burned Rome, for the city did not satisfy him; he wanted finer palaces. As he was

* The dates by Emperors' names give the length of the reigns, those by persecutions the duration of each of these.

afraid to own it, he accused the Christians of being the authors of the crime. He ordered a general persecution against them as enemies of the State.

The persecution extended throughout most of the provinces of the Roman Empire. The martyrs endured most horrible torments. Some were cast into the Tiber with stones round their necks; others were crucified; others, again, were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to be devoured by dogs. Many were covered with inflammable materials and set on fire to illuminate the city at night.

The most illustrious martyrs were SS. Peter and Paul, who suffered on the same day. While confined in the Mamertine prison, they converted forty-seven of the guard and their two captains. God caused a miraculous spring to rise in the prison in which the converts were baptized. St. Peter was condemned to be crucified. Feeling himself unworthy to die in the same posture as his Divine Master, he asked to be placed with his head downwards. As we have said, the great church of St. Peter on the Vatican Hill was built over the spot where the Apostle was buried. St. Paul, being a Roman citizen, could not be crucified, so Nero ordered him to be beheaded. His martyrdom took place outside Rome, where the church of the Three Fountains now stands. St. Andrew also suffered martyrdom during this persecution. He was crucified on a cross made in the form of the letter X.

Second Persecution, A.D. 95-96.

Under
Domitian,
A.D. 81-96.

Chiefly in
Rome.

Martyrs.

St. John the
Evangelist.

During the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, the Christians enjoyed peace, but Domitian renewed the edicts against them in A.D. 95. Many belonging to the noblest families in Rome suffered death or banishment. Flavius Clemens, cousin of the Emperor, and Acilius Glabrio, who had been consuls with Trajan, both received the crown of martyrdom. The two Domitillas, the niece and grand-niece of Domitian, were banished.

The younger Flavia Domitilla, grand-niece of the Emperor Domitian, was put to death by this Emperor, together with two of her servants, SS. Nereus and Achilleus. One of the most famous of the Catacombs had been constructed by this noble lady.

It was during this persecution that St. John was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil outside the Latin Gate, but, being miraculously preserved, he was banished to the island of Patmos.

Third Persecution, A.D. 106-117.

Under
Trajan,
A.D. 98-117.
Cause.

Trajan, one of the best Roman Emperors, was yet among the persecutors of the Church. He left it in peace, however, till the ninth year of his reign, when, returning triumphant from the conquest of the Scythians, he ordered a public thanksgiving to the gods, in which the Christians refused to take part. By this time the Roman Emperor and Governors were getting alarmed at the progress of Christianity. The old laws against

Christians were revived, and new ones added against secret assemblies. This was to prevent the faithful from meeting for Holy Mass. Then it was that the Catacombs were first used as churches. Pliny the Younger, Proconsul of Pontus and Bithynia, uncertain about the laws against the Christians, wrote to the Emperor for instructions. Trajan gave the following inconsistent reply: That he was not to search for the Christians, but to punish them if they persevered in the faith after being denounced and convicted.

The persecution raged most fiercely in Asia Minor. The most illustrious martyrs were St. Simeon and St. Ignatius of Antioch. The former was a cousin of our Lord, and brother to St. James the Less, whom he succeeded as Bishop of Jerusalem. He was denounced as a Christian, and suffered martyrdom at the advanced age of a hundred and twenty years.

St. Ignatius, called Theophorus, was the third Bishop of Antioch. Summoned before Trajan, who was passing through the city after conquering the Parthians, A.D. 107, the Saint refused to offer sacrifice to the gods. He was taken in chains to Rome, and during the public festivities exposed in the Colosseum, where he was torn to pieces by lions.

After the death of Trajan, the persecution continued under Hadrian, but it was not by any means so violent. This was because the Emperor had read the writings by which Aristides and Quadratus defended the Christians. He issued an edict in

A.D. 124, ordering that no Christian should be put to death without trial. In spite of his own order, Hadrian himself condemned to death St. Symphorosa and her seven sons. This holy family lived in a beautiful house near the Emperor's palace at Tivoli. On their refusal to sacrifice to the gods, they were brought before the Emperor, and St. Symphorosa was terribly tortured, but to no purpose. She was finally cast into the river Anio with a stone tied about her neck. Her bright example was followed next day by her seven sons, who all received the crown of martyrdom.

Fourth Persecution, A.D. 161-180.

Under
Marcus
Aurelius,
A.D. 161-180.

Marcus Aurelius, although the most virtuous of the Roman Emperors, yet issued fresh edicts against the Christians, A.D. 161. They were followed by an outburst of fury against the faithful in Rome, Asia Minor, and Gaul.

In Rome.

Among the most glorious martyrs in Rome were St. Felicitas, with her seven sons, and St. Justin, the Christian philosopher, with his five disciples.

In Asia
Minor.

In Asia Minor the chief sufferers were St. Polycarp and St. Germanicus; the latter was torn to pieces by lions. St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of St. John, when called upon to deny Christ, said: 'Six and eighty years have I been His servant, and He has never done me wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my King?' St. Polycarp was condemned to be burnt alive;

but, when placed on the pyre, the flames encircled without touching him, so that he had to be killed by a spear-thrust by one of the soldiers. After he had persecuted them for fifteen years a miraculous event caused Marcus Aurelius to be more favourable to the Christians. The Roman troops were engaged against the Quadi in Bohemia, and were surprised by the enemy and cut off from all supply of water. It was during an exceptionally dry summer, A.D. 174, and the sufferings of the soldiers were intense. In one of the legions there was a great number of Christians, who threw themselves on their knees and prayed to God for relief. An abundant shower of rain came as an answer to their prayer. The soldiers caught the water in their helmets and eagerly refreshed themselves. This caused great disorder in the Roman ranks, and the enemy took advantage of it to renew the attack. But God sent a violent thunderstorm which drove full against the Quadi without touching the Romans, who were able to gain an easy victory. We are told by Eusebius, an ancient historian, that, in consequence of this, Marcus Aurelius ordered the persecution to cease, and gave the name of "Thundering Legion" (*Fulminatrix*) to the division to which the Christian soldiers belonged.

But peace only lasted for three years. Then Persecution popular hatred against the Christians burst out afresh. The number of martyrs was immense, especially in Southern Gaul. SS. Maturus, In Gaul. Sanctus, and Attalus were made to sit on red-hot

The persecu-
tion ceases
for a time.

chairs, and were afterwards thrown to wild beasts.

SS. Epipodius and Alexander, two brave young Christians of Lyons, were put to death after cruel tortures; and St. Symphorian, a young noble of Autun, was beheaded before the eyes of his mother, who encouraged him to be faithful.

St. Blandina, a young slave, was dragged to death by a wild bull. St. Pothinus, the Bishop of Lyons, was so old and feeble that he had to be carried before his judges. His bold profession of faith enraged the people, who kicked and struck him so violently that he died in prison from his wounds. He was succeeded by the great St. Irenæus. It was during this persecution that Lucius, King of one of the small British States, sent to Pope Eleutherius for missionaries. Thus it was that our country was so early converted to the faith.

III. FROM THE FIFTH TO THE EIGHTH PERSECUTION.

Fifth Persecution, A.D. 202-211.

Under Septimius Severus, A.D. 193-211. Septimius Severus was at first favourable to the Christians, but in the tenth year of his reign he renewed all the edicts against them. The persecution raged in Africa, Italy, and Gaul. At Carthage great numbers suffered, among them St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas, who, with three other catechumens, were tormented and then thrown to wild beasts.

Vibia Perpetua was a noble lady, Felicitas a slave. The former had a little son a few months old. When she was accused of being a Christian, her father begged her to renounce her faith. But she was firm, and, with several others, was thrown into a dark, dismal prison, where they received baptism. Again her father came to implore her to yield, but in vain. When these brave martyrs were led before the tribunal, once more the poor old father approached Perpetua, holding her little babe on his arm, and besought her not to bring misery on her child. The judge ordered that he should be removed, and the soldiers struck him as they did so. Perpetua was more grieved at the sight of her father's distress and at seeing him struck than at her own fate, for she was immediately after condemned to be exposed to wild beasts. She and Felicitas were thrown before a wild cow, which tossed and gored them. But the people, touched by their courage and modesty, would not let the terrible scene continue, so they were put to death by the sword.

The persecution was not less furious in Egypt. It was there that St. Leonidas, father of Origen, suffered for the faith.

In Gaul the Emperor himself conducted the In Gaul. persecution. Hearing that Lyons had become entirely Christian, through the labours of St. Irenæus, its Bishop, he surrounded the city with his troops, and massacred all the inhabitants who would not renounce the faith. According to an ancient inscription, still to be seen in Lyons, the

number of martyrs reached 19,000, without counting the women and children.

Persecution
ceases for
several
years.

A few
Christians
martyred.

The Emperors who succeeded Septimius Severus were not so devoted to maintaining the Roman form of worship as their predecessors. They wanted to make a new form of religion by uniting several kinds of worship together; thus the Christians were not so much persecuted. The Emperor Alexander Severus was particularly favourable to the Christians, but the lesser officers in Rome often persecuted the faithful when he was obliged to be away at war. So, in spite of the peace, many martyrs gave their lives for the faith. Among other well-known names none is so familiar to us as that of St. Cecilia. She was descended from a noble Roman pagan family, but had received the faith in her early years, and had consecrated her virginity to God. Her parents had espoused her to a young pagan called Valerian. St. Cecilia told him of her vow, and said that she had an angel to protect her virginity. Valerian was so struck with this language that he said he would believe in our Lord if he could see the angel. At St. Cecilia's prayer his desire was granted. St. Cecilia instructed him in the doctrines of the faith, and he was soon baptized by Pope St. Urban. Valerian and his brother Tiburtius were denounced to the magistrate Almachius for burying the bodies of the martyrs, and were both condemned to death. The night before they suffered St. Cecilia, with several others, visited Valerian and his brother in the prison.

Their example and conversation converted the pagan guard, who also underwent martyrdom at daybreak. St. Cecilia distributed her wealth to the poor, and devoted her time to converting many, who were then baptized by St. Urban. The Prefect soon summoned her to appear before him. She answered all his threats and questions boldly, and was condemned to be suffocated in the caldarium or bathroom of her own palace. After remaining three days without air in that burning heat, the holy virgin was found uninjured. A soldier was sent to cut off her head, but he struck at it three times without severing it from her body. According to Roman custom, he might not strike again, and the saint was left to die, but she did not expire till three days afterwards, November 22, A.D. 230. In the church, which was once her palace, the caldarium is still to be seen.

It was in a vineyard belonging to St. Cecilia that one of the most famous Catacombs was excavated. It contained the crypt in which several Popes were buried, and where St. Cecilia herself was laid after her martyrdom. Her body, still incorrupt, was found there in the ninth century, and was then put in a church above ground, where, eight hundred years afterwards, it was again uncovered and exposed for the veneration of the faithful. With the exception of a few martyrdoms, the Christians were left in peace during twenty-four years. This tranquillity was disturbed during the two years that Maximin the Thracian reigned.

Papal crypt
in the
Catacombs.

Sixth Persecution, A.D. 235-238.

Under
Maximin the
Thracian,
A.D. 235-238.

This persecution was directed chiefly against the clergy. The Emperor Maximin thought to shake the faith of the people by depriving them of their pastors. The chief martyrs were two Popes, St. Pontianus (A.D. 235) and St. Anterus (A.D. 236), both of whom were buried in the Papal crypt. After this short persecution, the Christians again had peace for eleven years.

Seventh Persecution, A.D. 249-251.

Under
Decius,
A.D. 249-251.

In A.D. 249 the Emperor Decius resolved to destroy Christianity altogether, and to obtain this end he ordered that all who professed the faith should be cruelly tortured before being put to death. All the means of torture that human cruelty could invent were called into use—red-hot chairs and pincers, slow roasting before huge fires, boiling pitch, scourging, and racking—nothing was neglected to shake the constancy of the faithful. Many who would have met speedy death bravely recoiled before such horrible torments, and renounced their religion. These were known as the “Lapsed.” The number of martyrs was so great that public buildings had to be used as prisons. St. Fabian, Pope, St. Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, and St. Agatha, may be specially named. The last was a native of Sicily, and a virgin of noble birth. She was placed on a rack, after suffering other dreadful tortures, because she refused to break her vow of

virginity and become the bride of the Proconsul, or to adore his gods. The torments she endured were so great that she died in the hands of her persecutors. It was during this persecution that many of the faithful fled to deserts to escape such terrible trials of their constancy. They set the example of living as hermits, a practice which afterwards became widespread throughout the Church.

Eighth Persecution, A.D. 257-260.

Valerian was at first favourable to the Christians, but afterwards issued two edicts against them. ^{Under Valerian, A.D. 253-260.} The first forbade Christians even to go to the Catacombs, and ordered bishops and priests who refused to sacrifice to the gods to be sent into exile. The second edict ordered all clergy to be beheaded, confiscated the property of senators and knights, and exiled all ladies and others of rank who remained faithful to Christianity. Among the chief sufferers were St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, and Pope Sixtus II. This holy Pope was celebrating Mass in the Catacombs when seized by the soldiers. The Christians present all vied with each other in begging to be taken in his stead, but the deacons only were led away with the Pope, who was condemned to death, and taken back to the Catacombs to be beheaded. His pontifical throne was sprinkled with his blood. One of the deacons was St. Lawrence, who, when asked to give up the treasures of the Church, promised to do so. He then

collected together all the poor of Rome, and presented them as the Church's greatest treasures to the Prefect, who, in anger, immediately ordered him to be put to death. He was roasted on a gridiron before a slow fire.

At Utica a hundred and fifty-three martyrs suffered together. They were thrown alive into a pit of quicklime, and are hence known as "Massa Candida." We have a beautiful example of courage and faith in the conduct of a little child called Cyril. His father was a pagan, and, in hatred of the name of Christian, had driven his son from his house. The soldiers brought the child before the Governor, who tried gently to persuade him to renounce his faith in order to be restored to his home. St. Cyril answered, "I rejoice to be driven from my father's home; God will give me one much more grand and beautiful." Threats were then tried to frighten him, but neither the sight of the fires nor the sword could shake the courage of the little hero, who begged to die that he might be sooner with God. The bystanders wept when they saw him receive the crown of martyrdom.'

Valerian was succeeded by his son Galienus, A.D. 260. This Emperor was the first to issue edicts favourable to the Christians. They were declared a lawful society, and, as such, were protected by the State.

IV. THE NINTH AND TENTH PERSECUTIONS.

Ninth Persecution, A.D. 274-275.

Fourteen years later Aurelian determined to succeed where others had failed. He made up his mind to exterminate the Christians from his dominions. He was, however, assassinated eight months after his edicts were brought out. Among the numerous martyrs may be named Pope St. Felix I. and St. Denis, first Bishop of Paris, who was beheaded on Montmartre.

Before commencing the history of the Tenth Persecution, it is necessary to glance at the changes which had taken place in the government of the Roman Empire. In A.D. 286 Diocletian divided his dominion into two parts, the Eastern Empire and the Western Empire. The latter he bestowed upon Maximinian, under the title of Augustus of the West. Six years later, in A.D. 292, Diocletian further divided each Empire into two, giving the Governors the title of Cæsar. So now Diocletian governed the East, with Nicomedia as his capital; Maximinian had Italy and Africa, capital Milan; Constantius Chlorus received Gaul, Spain, and Britain, with Treves as his capital; while Galerius governed Illyricum and the country along the Danube, making Sirmium his capital.

Maximinian began to persecute the Christians in his dominions in A.D. 286. A revolt having broken out near Lyons, he sent for the Theban Legion, which was composed entirely of Chris-

Under
Aurelian,
A.D. 270-275.

Changes in
government
of Roman
Empire.

Beginning of
persecution.
In Gaul.

tians, to suppress it. But instead of employing them to quell the insurrection, Maximinian ordered the soldiers to seek out the Christians and put them to death.

The whole Legion, with their captain, St. Maurice, refused to obey such an unjust command. The Emperor then ordered them to stand in lines, and had the head of every tenth man struck off. This only served to encourage the remainder, and a second decimation had no better result. The Legion declared themselves faithful soldiers to the Emperor, ready to die in his defence, but persisted in refusing to put innocent Christians to death. At last, Maximinian, despairing of overcoming their constancy, caused them to be surrounded by the rest of his army, and slain as they stood. It is said that six thousand received the crown of martyrdom.

In Rome,

Another celebrated martyr was St. Sebastian, captain of the Praetorian Guard. He was denounced to Diocletian for visiting and encouraging the imprisoned Christians. The Emperor reproached him with misuse of the trust he had put in him, to which Sebastian replied, that though always faithful to the Emperor, he had long ago discovered the folly of adoring gods of stone. Diocletian in anger called for a company of archers, commanding them to shoot the Saint to death. St. Sebastian's body was covered with wounds, and he was left for dead. Irene, a holy widow, who came to carry away his body, found that Sebastian still breathed. She nursed him back to life, and a few days afterwards

Diocletian was astonished to see among his courtiers the pale face of the captain of the guards, whom he thought to be dead. Furious



Anderson Photo

ST. SEBASTIAN.
(*Sodoma.*)

at such boldness, the Emperor instantly ordered the holy martyr to be taken to the hippodrome*

* Racetrack for horses and chariots.

of the palace, where he was beaten to death by clubs (A.D. 288).

Tenth Persecution, A.D. 303-305.

During an expedition of Maximian throughout Gaul, many others besides the Theban Legion suffered martyrdom. About the same time, a few fell victims, like St. Sebastian, to the angry passions of Diocletian, but the Tenth Persecution did not begin in earnest till A.D. 303. A fresh edict was passed in that year ordering all churches to be destroyed—among others those of the Catacombs—the Scriptures and all pious books to be burnt, and allowing the free use of torture against Christians. This edict was followed by three others, the later surpassing the earlier in cruelty.

Under
Diocletian,
A.D. 284-305.

Not equally
severe in all
places.

The severity of the persecution varied in different countries according to the inclinations of their rulers. It was enforced with the greatest cruelty in the East by Galerius. In the West, Constantius secretly favoured the Christians, though he dared not openly disobey the edicts; hence many suffered for the faith—as, for instance, St. Alban, the first martyr in Britain.

Martyrs
innumerable.

Among other glorious martyrs in other parts of the Empire may be named St. Peter, Patriarch of Alexandria, and St. Januarius, Bishop of Naples. In Spain, St. Eulalia, a child of twelve, was torn with iron hooks, and afterwards burned with lighted torches. SS. Justus and Pastor, little boys of thirteen and seven, ran away from school to declare themselves Christians, and were beheaded.

St. Lucy suffered at Syracuse, St. Agnes at Rome. St. Lucy.
The latter was only fifteen years of age and very



Boggi Photo.

ST. LUCY.
(*Dolci.*)

beautiful, so that the Prefect's son wanted to make St. Agnes her his wife. But St. Agnes had chosen Jesus

Christ as her spouse, and refused all his offers and promises of wealth. She was placed on a funeral pile, but the flames separated without touching her, so that the Prefect ordered her to be beheaded, A.D. 304. The persecution raged furiously till A.D. 305, the number who suffered reaching many thousands.

Persecution interrupted in the West, A.D. 305.

In A.D. 305 Diocletian suddenly resigned, and Maximian was obliged to do the same. Their places were filled by Galerius and Constantius, with Severus and Maximin as associates. This caused many changes in the government of the Roman Empire, and interrupted the fury of the persecution. Henceforth the sufferings of the Christians depended entirely on the disposition of each ruler. Thus, though Galerius continued the persecution in the East, the Christians of Spain, Gaul, and Britain enjoyed peace under Constantius.

Strife among Roman rulers leads to end of persecution, A.D. 312-324.

When Constantius died he was succeeded by his son, Constantine the Great, who was always favourable to the Christians. As the persecution still continued in the East, Constantine turned



ST. AGNES.

his arms against the persecutors, and successively defeated the Governors of Italy A.D. 312, Asia Minor and Syria A.D. 324. These victories made him sole ruler of the Roman Empire. Always a Christian at heart, Constantine now publicly professed the faith, and made Christianity the religion of the State. In A.D. 325 he issued a decree expressing his desire that all his subjects should become Christians, and proclaimed himself guardian and defender of the faith. Thus did the Christian religion triumph over the pagan world after more than three hundred years of persecution.

It is a remarkable fact that God punished with violent deaths nearly all the Emperors who had persecuted the Church. Fate of
persecuting
Emperors.

Nero was declared an enemy of the State, and condemned to be hurled from the Tarpeian Rock, which fate he only escaped by suicide. Domitian and Maximin were both assassinated. Decius was killed by barbarians, and his body left as prey to the wild beasts. Valerian was taken prisoner by the Persians, and served as stirrup-holder to their King. He was afterwards flayed alive. Aurelian was murdered by his courtiers. Diocletian, worn out by excess, let himself die of hunger, while Maximian strangled himself. Galerius, whose cruelty against the Christians was so great, was seized with a most dreadful disease. Finding his doctors were unable to cure him, he issued an edict of toleration to the Christians, and begged their prayers for his recovery. But his repentance was not sincere, and he died amidst terrible sufferings.

Well may the Church, in the office of her martyrs, quote the following words from the Book of Wisdom : "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labours. These seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation, saying within themselves, repenting and groaning in anguish of spirit : 'These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.'"





CHAPTER IV

ATTACKS AGAINST THE CHURCH DURING FIRST THREE CENTURIES

I. ATTACKS BY PAGANS.

WE have said that, besides the attacks made on the Church by persecution, many of the pagans tried to shake the faith of the Christians by writing all sorts of untrue things against Catholic teaching, and accused the faithful of crimes which they had never committed. Thus the Christians were held up as atheists, because they would not adore the false gods of the Romans; they were also accused of being enemies of the State, and of being disloyal to the Emperor, and of many other crimes so grievous that they would have died rather than commit them. The enemies of the Church sought by these accusations to make the Christian religion appear less holy and less attractive to the pagans, and hoped thus to prevent many from becoming Christians.

Accused of
atheism and
treason.

Christian
faith
defended by
apologists.

But God raised up many learned and clever men, who, by their teaching, and especially by their writings, defended the Church against these dangerous attacks. These men were called "Apologists." Their writings are known as "Apologies," and are letters addressed to Emperors and others, in which the calumnies against the Christian religion are disproved, and which also contain instructions on Christian belief and the practice of virtue. Among the most learned of the Apologists may be named St. Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen.

St. Justin.

St. Justin Martyr was born at Neapolis, in Palestine.* His parents were pagan Greeks, and Justin eagerly studied every system of Greek philosophy, but failed to find the truth in any. One day when he was walking on the seashore he met an unknown man, who told him to study the doctrines of Christianity.

This he at once commenced to do. His longings after the truth were all satisfied by the teachings of the Church, and he became a Christian. St. Justin devoted the rest of his life to preaching and defending the faith. He wore the dress of a Greek philosopher, even after his conversion, because it won him a respectful hearing from the people. In A.D. 150 he went to Rome and opened a school of theology. St. Justin wrote two Apologies. The first was to the Roman Emperor, Antoninus Pius, and his Senate. In it he asked that the Christians might not be punished simply

* Formerly Sichem, now Nablous.

because they were Christians, but only if they were guilty of any real crime. This letter was favourably received by the Emperor, who granted his request. The second Apology was written to Marcus Aurelius, who answered it by causing St. Justin to be martyred. He gladly gave his life for the truth he had so nobly defended by his writings.

St. Irenæus, a disciple of St. Polycarp, and St. Irenæus. Bishop of Lyons, wrote a refutation of all the heresies of his time, and said that they could all be condemned by the tradition of the Church established in Rome by the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul. All these early Apologists wrote in Greek, except Tertullian and St. Cyprian.

Tertullian, born at Carthage, A.D. 160, was the earliest defender of the faith who wrote in Latin. He had been converted from paganism, and was most zealous in using his vast learning in the service of the Church. Unfortunately, in consequence of giving way to his fierce temper, as he himself owns, he fell away from the true faith and even founded a new sect. Still, his writings have been of much use, and are considered of very great authority. He lived to an advanced age, but it is to be feared that he was never reconciled to the Church.

St. Cyprian, a native of Carthage, was converted in the year A.D. 246. His two Apologies were written some years later. In the second he proves from Scripture the Divinity of Christ. St. Cyprian became Bishop of Carthage A.D. 248, and was beheaded during the persecution under

Valerian before the walls of his native city, on September 13, A.D. 258.

Origen.

Origen was the son of Leonidas, who lived at Alexandria. When his father was martyred, under the Emperor Septimius Severus, Origen wanted to be a martyr too, but his mother hid his clothes, so that he could not go out to declare himself a Christian.

Origen was exceedingly learned, and particularly famous for his knowledge of the Bible, of which he had learnt a portion by heart every day. He was soon placed at the head of the School of Alexandria, which was renowned all over the world as a great centre of learning. Some of Origen's speculative opinions have been condemned by the Church.

Among the most celebrated of Origen's works, which were very numerous, is his "Apology for the Christian Religion." It is specially directed against the calumnies of Celsus, a pagan philosopher. Origen spent twenty-eight years on a work called the "Hexapla," which contained in six parallel columns different versions of the Old Testament. During the Decian persecution Origen was cast into prison, and tortured in various ways for the faith. When Decius died he was released, but did not long outlive his sufferings. He died at Tyre in the year 254.

II. ATTACKS ON THE CHURCH BY HERETICS.

Even in these early days, the Church had enemies still more dangerous than her persecutors and calumniators. These were the leaders of heresy. The former could only harm the Christians in their life, or honour, or property, while the teachers of false doctrine often injured their souls by leading them to forsake the true faith. The founders or originators of a doctrine contrary to the truths of God we call heresiarchs. Those who follow the false teaching are heretics, and the false doctrine or teaching which denies some article of faith is a heresy. Unfortunately, several heresies began to be taught during the lifetime of the Apostles. The following are some of the principal heresies of the first three centuries :

The CERINTHIANS, who take their name from their founder, Cerinthus, who denied the Divinity of Christ, and against whom St. John wrote his Gospel.

The SIMONIANS were those who followed the teaching of Simon the Magician. He claimed to be the Messiah, and separated from the Church after being rebuked by St. Peter for offering to purchase the power of giving the Holy Ghost.

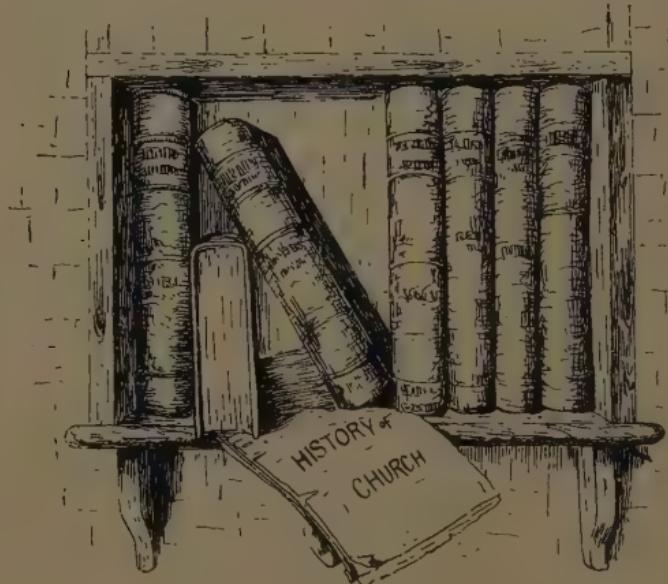
The GNOSTICS—*i.e.*, those who know—were numerous during the second and third centuries. Their doctrines were a mixture of paganism and Christianity. The chief leaders of the Gnostics were Valentinus and Marcion.

The MANICHÆANS, founded by Mani, or Manich-

æus, taught that there were two Gods, one the author of good, the other the author of evil. They also held that Jesus Christ took a human body only in appearance.

Numerous sects which sprang up in the Church taught different heresies about the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and they are therefore known by the name of ANTI-TRINITARIAN heretics.

The MONTANISTS were founded by Montanus, about A.D. 173. He gave himself out to be a prophet of Christ. His chief error was in teaching that the Church had not power to forgive all mortal sins. Tertullian was led away by this heresy, and attacked Pope Callixtus for condemning it. It was adopted by the Novatians, against whom St. Cyprian wrote. This error became widely spread in Asia, Europe, and North Africa.





CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH UNDER CHRISTIAN EMPERORS

I. THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY.

THREE hundred years had elapsed since the End of Ascension of our Blessed Lord. Pagan rulers had persecutions. done their worst against the Church, and had utterly failed. The time was now come when God would deliver His faithful people from such terrible trials and sufferings, and would cause His Church to triumph over her heathen foes.

We have seen that one of the Cæsars chosen by Diocletian and Maximinian to aid them in governing the Roman Empire was Constantius Chlorus, and that this noble-hearted man would not allow Christians to be persecuted in his province when he could help it. He married a Princess named Helena, who probably was a British lady. They had a son known in history as Constantine the Great. In A.D. 306 this Prince succeeded his

father as Cæsar, or Governor, of Britain and Gaul.

War between
rulers of the
Roman
Empire.

The rulers of the Roman Empire at this time disagreed among themselves. Maxentius, the Italian Cæsar, declared war against Constantine, who advanced to meet him. He had got as far as Rome, when, one midday, he saw in the heavens a bright cross of light with the words, "In this sign thou shalt conquer." The following night our Lord appeared to him and told him to use the cross as a standard, promising him victory if he did so. Up to this Constantine had always used the famous Roman eagle as his ensign. Now he caused another to be made like the cross he had seen in the sky. This was called the Labarum, and became the first Christian standard of war ever used. The cross was formed by a long lance with a beam at its upper end. From the arms hung a richly-jewelled banner, on which the monogram of Christ was worked **P.**

Victory of
Constantine,
A.D. 312.

With this standard at the head of his army, Constantine marched to victory. Maxentius was defeated at the Battle of Milvian Bridge, A.D. 312, and Constantine reigned over the Western Empire. Twelve years later another war broke out, which ended in the death of the Eastern Emperor, Licinius. Thus Constantine became sole master of the wide-spreading Roman Empire.

Constantine
favourable to
Christians.

Constantine had favoured the Christians even before his famous victory. But, seeing that he owed so much to the cross of our Divine Lord, he himself became a catechumen, without, however, de-

clar ing it openly or being baptized. He ordered all persecutions to cease in the land over which he reigned. He caused an edict or solemn proclamation to be issued, granting great privileges to Christians, and restoring to them the churches that had been taken away from them. Slaves were to be less cruelly treated, and might more easily gain their freedom. Certain sacrifices were forbidden. The punishment of crucifixion was abolished, and Sunday was set apart as a day of rest, A.D. 321.

It was only when he became master of the whole Empire that Constantine openly declared himself a Christian. At this time he bestowed the Lateran Palace on the Pope, gave large gifts in money and lands to the Church, and expressed a wish that his subjects should be Christians. He helped the Pope to call the first General Council of Nicæa. He built many churches; some of the most famous were in Palestine.

St. Helena, mother of Constantine, had become a Christian, and, though she was very aged, she undertook a journey to the Holy Land in order to watch over the buildings. She was very anxious to find the true Cross. Two hundred years before, the Emperor Hadrian had ordered that Mount Calvary should be covered with earth, so that people might forget where it was; but as a great statue of Venus was placed on the top, it only served to mark the spot, and St. Helena had no difficulty in finding it.

Three crosses were discovered, but there was

Constantine
declares
himself a
Christian.

Finding of
the true
Cross.

nothing to show which was that of our Blessed Lord. A woman of position in Jerusalem lay ill of an incurable disease. The crosses were borne to her bedside, and as soon as the true Cross touched her she was healed. A portion of the blessed wood was detached, placed in a magnificent reliquary, and sent to Constantine. The remainder St. Helena left under the care of the Bishop of Jerusalem. She built many fine churches in the Holy Land before returning to Rome. That over the Cave of the Nativity at Bethlehem is still standing.

Constantinople new capital of Empire.

About this time, a new city which Constantine had built, and which he called Constantinople, was solemnly dedicated as the capital of the Roman Empire. Constantine was now at the height of his glory.

Unfortunately, he sometimes acted in a way that was very wrong, especially in a Christian, and on one very important matter he let himself be deceived in a strange way for one so wise. This we shall see in the next chapter.

Falling dangerously ill, Constantine received



ST. HELENA.

the sacrament of baptism at Nicomedia, and died a few days afterwards, A.D. 337. This is the account given by Eusebius; but the Roman local tradition has always been that he was baptized at the Lateran by Pope Sylvester, about A.D. 312. He divided the Empire among his three sons, Constantine II., Constantius, and Constans. Within a few years, by the death of his brothers, Constantius was left alone to rule the vast dominions of Rome.

II. DOWNFALL OF PAGANISM.

Constantius, the last of the three sons of Constantine the Great, was succeeded as Emperor by Julian, his cousin. In history he is known as Julian the Apostate, because, through hatred of Christianity, he abandoned the true faith in which he had been brought up. He determined to make the Empire pagan again. To accomplish this, he ordered the temples destroyed by Constantine to be rebuilt at the expense of the Christians, who had to give up for the purpose all the lands and money they had received for their churches. The Christians were no longer allowed to hold any public offices, but pagans were chosen to fill all places of trust, and were loaded with innumerable favours. The clergy were deprived of their pensions, and forbidden to teach even secular subjects. In fact, the Emperor did all he could to throw disgrace and contempt on the Catholic religion. If only he could persuade Christians to give up their

The Emperor Julian attempts to restore paganism, A.D. 361.

faith, he treated them with even greater honour than he did the pagans, and placed them in the highest posts.

Attempt to
rebuild
Temple at
Jerusalem.

If the Apostate hated Christians, he hated our Lord Jesus Christ still more. He thought he could easily make Christians give up their faith if he could show that our Lord had deceived them by false prophecies. As our Divine Master had said that the Temple of Jerusalem should be utterly destroyed, Julian determined it should be rebuilt with great magnificence.

The Jews hastened from all parts, and the work began. But hardly were the first foundations laid when a terrible earthquake destroyed all that had been done, and globes of fire came out of the earth and burnt great numbers of the workmen. Every time the work was renewed this miracle was repeated, till at last Julian was forced to abandon his plan. He had only succeeded in proving yet more strongly the truth of the very prophecies he sought to falsify. Far from limiting the spread of the faith, his act became the means of many conversions.

After a short reign of two years, in A.D. 363, the Emperor, while engaged in war with Persia, was struck by a javelin thrown by an unknown hand. His blood spouted out, and, in his despair, Julian threw some of it towards heaven, crying out, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

Death of
Julian,
A.D. 363.

The death of Julian the Apostate ended the struggle of paganism against Christianity, for Jovian, who succeeded him as Emperor, was him-

self a Christian, and had suffered for his faith under Julian. Jovian's first care was to reopen the churches, and to restore the privileges and property of the clergy. He recalled the Christians to the offices from which they had been driven by Julian and his pagan favourites. Henceforward the rulers of Rome were Christians, and the faith spread rapidly throughout the whole Empire.

End of
paganism.

III. FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

During the centuries which ensued the great Roman Empire was gradually falling to pieces. Even so far back as the reign of Augustus various German tribes had continually invaded the fair Roman provinces north of the Danube. Though they were always driven back, the enemy gradually grew stronger, while the Empire grew weaker. Sometimes a German chief with his tribe would take service in the Roman armies, and receive a grant of land as a reward—the chief becoming a Roman general or governor. Thus these German or Teutonic people gradually learned and adopted Roman ways and customs, and also their religion, so that we find that the Teutons were Christians before they finally settled in the Roman Empire.

The first great Teutonic invasion was caused by the Huns, a fierce people who long before had been driven out of China. They came in crowds into the fertile lands of the Goths, a Teutonic tribe, and, taking their country, forced them over

Roman
Empire
attacked by
barbarians.

Cause of
these
invasions.

Gothic invasion.

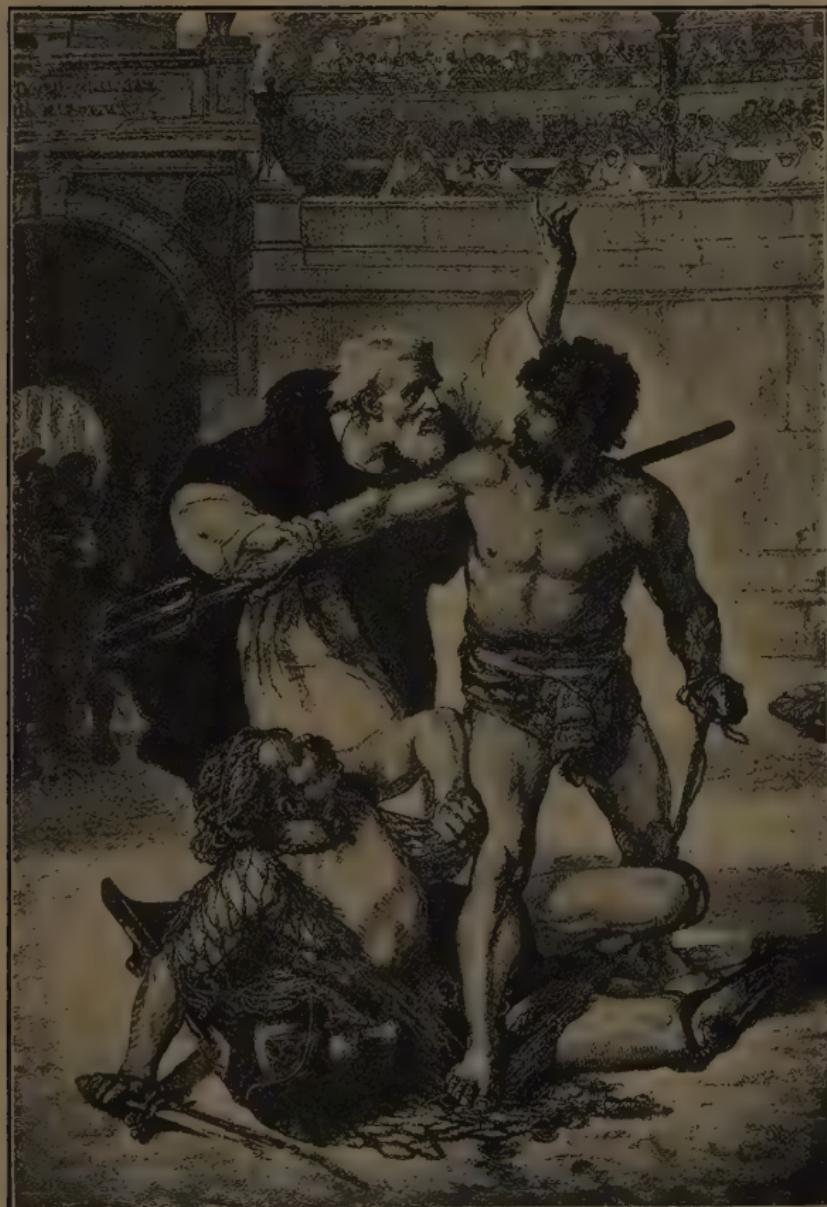
the Danube into Roman territory, where the Goths were allowed to remain and settle. Those who advanced far westwards were called Visigoths; the eastern settlers were known as Ostrogoths. The last of the great Roman Emperors was Theodosius. He succeeded for a time in keeping the invaders in check, but when he died, and the Empire was finally divided into two (the Western and the Eastern), things rapidly went from bad to worse.

Revolt of the Visigoths,
A.D. 410.

The Visigoths, who had settled in the Empire, revolted against their Roman rulers, and under their king, Alaric, advanced upon Rome, which they sacked and pillaged, A.D. 410. Then it was that Roman troops were called home, and distant provinces like Britain were abandoned to their enemies, so that whole countries were cut off from the Empire by the settlements made by Teutonic tribes, chiefly the Saxons, Franks, Burgundians, and Vandals.

Invasion of Huns.

But both the Teutonic settlers and the Roman Empire itself were threatened by the fierce Asiatic tribes of Huns, led on by their king Attila. He ravaged the Roman land far and wide. At length, in A.D. 451, he was defeated near Chalons, in France, by the united forces of the Romans, Goths, and Franks. Attila himself escaped, and, with fresh hordes, advanced towards Italy. Nothing was done to oppose him by the terrified Emperor and people, and he was crossing the rich plain of Lombardy when Pope Leo IV. (the Great) came forward to withstand the haughty



THE MONK TELEMACHUS SACRIFICES HIS LIFE TO OBTAIN THE
ABOLITION OF GLADIATORIAL COMBATS.

(*Stallaert.*)

conqueror. Vested in his pontificals, he met Attila near the Mincio, and succeeded in inducing him to withdraw.

The Romans rejoiced at their recovered safety, but soon forgot their deliverer's warning—that they had been thus threatened on account of their wickedness, and that if they did not repent, God's judgments would still overtake them.

Vandal invasion.

Another Teutonic tribe, the Vandals, under Genseric, came into Italy from North Africa, where they had settled, and Pope Leo's words came true only four years after they were uttered. Genseric advanced against Rome A.D. 455. Again St. Leo interceded for the people. This time he could only obtain the promise that the lives of the Romans and the principal monuments of the city should be spared. Rome was pillaged during fourteen days, and, in spite of his promise, Genseric's barbarians carried off many beautiful works of art.

Last Roman Emperor.

The West Roman Emperors at this time were a worthless set of men. The last was named Romulus Augustulus. After his death, the Senate voted that one Emperor was enough, and said that Zeno, the East Roman Emperor, should rule over the whole Empire. But this union was one in name only, for Zeno was forced to allow Odoacer, a Teutonic chief, to reign over Italy with the title of Patrician.

Fall of
West Roman
Empire,
A.D. 476.

Thus ended the great Roman Empire. But the old Roman laws and names went on long after the wide Roman provinces had passed into the hands

of a number of Teutonic chiefs, and had been broken up into small states. These smaller states, however, gradually became new kingdoms, while the old inhabitants were either enslaved or driven away, and the conquerors settled down as lords and rulers. Thus, from the ruins of the vast Roman Empire, arose the modern European states and nations.





CHAPTER VI

SOME EARLY HERESIES AND DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

I. CHIEF HERESIES.

Heresy of Arius.

Heresy of
Arius.

WHILE Constantine the Great worked at the destruction of idolatry, and at extending the faith throughout his dominions, a new enemy appeared among the members of the Church itself in the person of Arius, an apostate priest. This wicked man taught that God the Son was not equal in all perfections to God the Father, that He was not co-eternal with the Father, but was created by Him as first and chief among creatures.

Arius excom-
municated,
A.D. 321.

St. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, called a Synod which excommunicated Arius, and condemned his teaching, A.D. 321. After this Arius went into Palestine, where he persuaded Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, to adopt his views. This bishop secured for Arius the favour of the Emperor, and that of many bishops of Asia Minor.

As the heresy was becoming so widespread, a First General Council^{*} was held at Nicæa, in Asia Minor, to examine and condemn the doctrines taught by Arius and his followers. St. Athanasius was the chief champion of the Catholic Faith, which teaches that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is God, co-eternal with God the Father, and co-equal with Him in all things. The Fathers of the Council chose the word "Consubstantial," proposed by St. Athanasius, to express this doctrine, and drew up a formula of faith containing the exact teaching of the Church about the equality of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. This formula is known as the "Nicene Creed." It does not teach anything new or different from what is in the Apostles' Creed, but it expresses our belief more fully: "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, by Whom all things were made."

After the Church had thus condemned Arianism as a heresy, Constantine banished its author to Illyricum; but afterwards his favourite sister, Constantia (who had become an Arian), wishing to please Eusebius of Nicomedia, persuaded the Emperor to allow Arius to return, A.D. 328. As St. Athanasius would not remove the sentence of

Banishment
and recall of
Arius.

* A General or *Œcumical* Council is one which all the bishops of the world are summoned to attend, and which is presided over by the Pope or his Legate.

excommunication that St. Alexander had passed against Arius, Eusebius and other friends of the heresiarch made several false accusations against the Saint. Constantine summoned both parties to appear before a court of inquiry; but, though St. Athanasius was declared innocent, his enemies

induced the Emperor to exile him from his see to the distant city of Treves. But the faithful people of Alexandria would have nothing to do with Arius. He therefore went to Constantinople, and the Emperor ordered the bishop of that city to receive him in the Church. The bishop knew that he was powerless by himself to prevent the heresiarch's entrance. He could but pray that God would not permit such a



ST. ATHANASIUS.

scandal. As Arius was on his way to the church, surrounded by a triumphant crowd, he was seized with a violent illness, and withdrew. His partisans, after a while, went to seek him, and he was found dead, lying in a pool of his own blood, A.D. 336. The dreadful punishment that God inflicted upon this enemy of His Church so impressed Constantine

that, when he was on his own deathbed a few months after (A.D. 337), he gave orders for the recall of St. Athanasius from banishment; but the order was not carried out until A.D. 338. The Alexandrians received him back with great manifestations of joy.

But Constans, the son and successor of Constantine in Africa, had become an Arian, and when fresh charges were brought against St. Athanasius by his enemies, this Emperor banished him a second time, A.D. 341. He was not allowed to return to Alexandria until A.D. 349.

St. Athanasius was again banished by Constantius, who was a furious partisan of the heretics.

To such lengths did the Arian Emperor go that the venerable Hosius of Cordova, who had presided, as Papal Legate, at the Council of Nicæa, was scourged and tortured, though above eighty years of age, and thus compelled to sign an Arian creed. Pope Liberius, who had suffered nobly for the Catholic faith, was dragged into exile, and St. Athanasius was told that the Pope had been forced to sign a similar document. St. Athanasius remarked that one who signs under compulsion shows not his own mind, but that of his oppressor. It could in no sense be regarded as a papal approval of heresy.

St. Athanasius returned to take charge of his flock on the accession of the next Emperor, Julian the Apostate, and before long the fame of the many conversions he wrought reached Julian, who by Julian,

immediately ordered him to quit, not only Alexandria, but even Egypt. The Saint escaped from the soldiers who came to seize him, and sailed up the Nile. When they had gone some distance, they saw the persecutors' ship gaining on them. St. Athanasius ordered the sailors to turn their boat round to meet his pursuers. The rowers did not recognize him, and asked if Athanasius were far ahead. "Press on," answered the Saint; "he is very near." The rowers redoubled their efforts, and meanwhile the holy bishop got back to Alexandria safely, and remained hidden until the death of Julian.

by Valens.

A fifth time he was driven away. But at last Valens, moved by the urgent entreaties of the people of Alexandria, allowed St. Athanasius to return in peace to his diocese, where he remained until his death, which occurred in A.D. 373.

The Heresy of Macedonius.

Very shortly after the death of Arius his followers began to teach quite other doctrines than those he had taught them: they became divided into several sects, some of whom taught one doctrine, some another, and thus from the first great heresy of Arianism arose several others. The principal of these sects was that of the Macedonians. As Arius had attacked the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, saying, He was not equal to God the Father, so did Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople, attack the Holy Ghost, the Third Divine Person. His doctrines

were quickly condemned, for the Council of Constantinople was called against him in A.D. 381.

Condemned
at Second
General
Council,
A.D. 381.

The Nicene Council had added explanations to that part of the Creed which teaches us what we must believe about Jesus Christ, True God and True Man. The Council of Constantinople did the same to the eighth article, explaining more fully the Catholic doctrine about the Holy Ghost.

The Creed called the Nicene, and of Constantinople, consists of two parts. The first part is that drawn up at Nicæa to explain the first seven articles of the Apostles' Creed. The second part, the explanation of the last five articles, is that added at Constantinople.

St. Augustine and the Pelagian Heresy.

As St. Athanasius had defended the Church against the heretical teaching of the Arians, so St. Augustine was the champion of the true faith against the errors taught by Pelagius and his disciple Celestius.

St. Augustine was born at Tagaste, near Hippo, St. Augustine's birthplace. He was brought up as a Christian by his mother, St. Monica, but was not baptized. Having been sent to a pagan school by his father, Patricius, he fell in with bad companions and led a very wicked life. For nine years he followed the heresy of the Manichæans, but the prayers of St. Monica for her son were at last heard, and Augustine received the grace to abandon his sins and become, not only a great saint, but also a

defender of the faith he had before neglected. He was baptized by St. Ambrose on Holy Saturday, A.D. 387. After three years St. Augustine was ordained priest, and in A.D. 395 he was consecrated Bishop of Hippo.

Pelagian heresy.

It was at this time that the heresy of Pelagius arose. Pelagius was a native of Britain, but went to Rome at the end of the fourth century, where he commenced to teach that we can save ourselves by our own efforts without the aid of grace, and that mankind has not inherited any stain of original sin. When Rome was sacked by the Goths in A.D. 410, Pelagius went to Carthage, where St. Augustine soon found out the errors of his teaching.

Pelagianism condemned.

Then Pelagius went to Jerusalem and began to teach. He managed so to deceive his judges that he was acquitted of the charge of heresy. But St. Augustine, hearing of what had been done, brought the question before two Synods, which condemned the teaching of Pelagius and Celestius. The decrees of these Synods were sent to Rome, and when the Pope confirmed them, St. Augustine said, "Rescripts have come : the case is finished"; in other words, "Rome has spoken : the cause is ended."

Semi-Pelagianism.

Later on, a milder form of the heresy of Pelagius began to be taught. It was known as Semi-Pelagianism, and held that though grace is necessary for carrying on good works, man can begin them by his own power. Against this teaching St. Augustine wrote two works to explain fully



ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. MONICA.
(Scheffer.)

the doctrine of the Church about grace and free will. Both these heresies soon died out.

Death of St. Augustine. For thirty-five years St. Augustine continued to preach and write in defence of the faith. He died A.D. 430, during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals.

St. Jerome. Another great defender of the Church against Pelagianism was St. Jerome. He was born about the year A.D. 340 in Dalmatia. He was sent to Rome to complete his studies, and was baptized there about A.D. 365. After an illness which he suffered at Antioch, St. Jerome went into the desert of Chalcis for four years.

He was ordained priest in A.D. 378, and went to Constantinople, where he helped St. Gregory Nazianzen to get rid of the Arian and Macedonian heresies from amongst his people. After three years St. Jerome went to Rome. The Pope, St. Damasus, kept him there for many years, that he might have the benefit of his assistance. After the death of this holy Pope he left the Eternal City for Bethlehem, where he spent the last years of his life in one of the caves near the grotto of the Nativity. There he directed the nuns of three convents, and gave himself up to prayer, mortification, and the study of the Sacred Scriptures until his death, which took place in A.D. 420.

Translation of the Bible. Although St. Jerome wrote against both the Arian and Pelagian heresies, he is chiefly famous for the translation he made of the Scriptures from Hebrew into Latin. This translation is known as the "Latin Vulgate," and was declared authentic by the Council of Trent.

Nestorianism and St. Cyril of Alexandria.

The next great heresy that disturbed the Church was begun by Nestorius. He taught that there were two persons in Christ, and that the Blessed Virgin is not Mother of God, but only of Christ's human person. St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, <sup>St. Cyril
defends the
truth.</sup> defended the glories of our Lady, and showed that, as the Catechism says, "Jesus Christ is truly God, because He has the nature of God, born of the Father from all eternity; and there is only one person in Jesus Christ, which is the Person of God the Son," so that our Blessed Lady is truly Mother of God.

Nestorius would not submit to the condemnation of his errors by St. Cyril, so a General Council was called finally to settle the question.

The bishops met at Ephesus, where many suppose our Lady to have died. They condemned the heresy of Nestorius and deprived him of his see. The joy of the people of Ephesus, who had waited all day for the decision, was unbounded when they heard that the title "Mother of God" was solemnly acknowledged by the Church. The Emperor Theodosius banished Nestorius to Upper Egypt.

Eutychianism and Pope St. Leo.

Eutyches, an aged priest, who lived in a monastery near Constantinople, while opposing Nestorianism, fell into an opposite heresy, and taught that Jesus Christ had only one nature, which was

St. Flavian
defends the
faith.

a mixture of the divine and human. Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople, held a Synod in A.D. 448, which deposed and excommunicated Eutyches, and condemned his heresy.

When Pope Leo the Great heard what had been done, he wrote to Flavian approving the acts of the Synod, and explaining the Catholic doctrine about the two natures in Christ. This letter is known as the "Dogmatic Epistle" of St. Leo.

Robber
Council.

In A.D. 449, Theodosius II., the Emperor of the East, called a Council at Ephesus, but he would not allow the Pope's legates to preside or to read his Dogmatic Epistle. St. Flavian and other opponents of Eutyches were deposed. St. Flavian was condemned to exile, but was so harshly treated by the Eutychians that he died soon after. This Council is known as the "Robber Council of Ephesus," because of the violent conduct of its members. St. Leo condemned the acts of this Council, but the Emperor refused to retract the approval he had given to the "Robber Council." However, he died shortly afterwards, and the new Emperor, Marcian, took the side of the Pope and the Catholic faith.

Fourth
General
Council,
Chalcedon,
A.D. 451.

With the consent of St. Leo, Marcian summoned a General Council at Chalcedon, in which the doctrine of the two natures in Jesus Christ was defined and the Eutychian heresy condemned. The Pope's Dogmatic Epistle was read, and when the bishops heard it they all exclaimed: "This is the faith of the Apostles; Peter has spoken by the mouth of Leo!"

But although the teaching of Eutyches was thus condemned by the Church, several Eastern Emperors continued to favour it, and the heresy continued to spread, so that it was again condemned at the General Council of Constantinople, A.D. 553. After this it gradually died out, except in a few districts where it exists still, as among the Jacobites of Syria, the Copts of Egypt, and the Abyssinian Christians.

II. THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH.

In giving the history of the different heresies, we have already named a few of the most illustrious Fathers of the Church. There were, however, many others whose learning and virtues helped to defend the Church against the attacks of heresy and schism. They are generally called the Fathers of the Eastern Church, and the Fathers of the Western Church.

Eastern Fathers.

During the fourth century the principal Fathers of the East were : (1) St. Athanasius ; (2) St. Cyril of Jerusalem, whose "Catechetical Lectures" are the earliest regular course of instruction on Christian doctrine that has come down to us ; (3) St. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, celebrated for his eloquent preaching against the Arians and Macedonians ; (4) St. Gregory Nazianzen, the companion of the early studies of St. Basil, at Athens, renowned for his knowledge

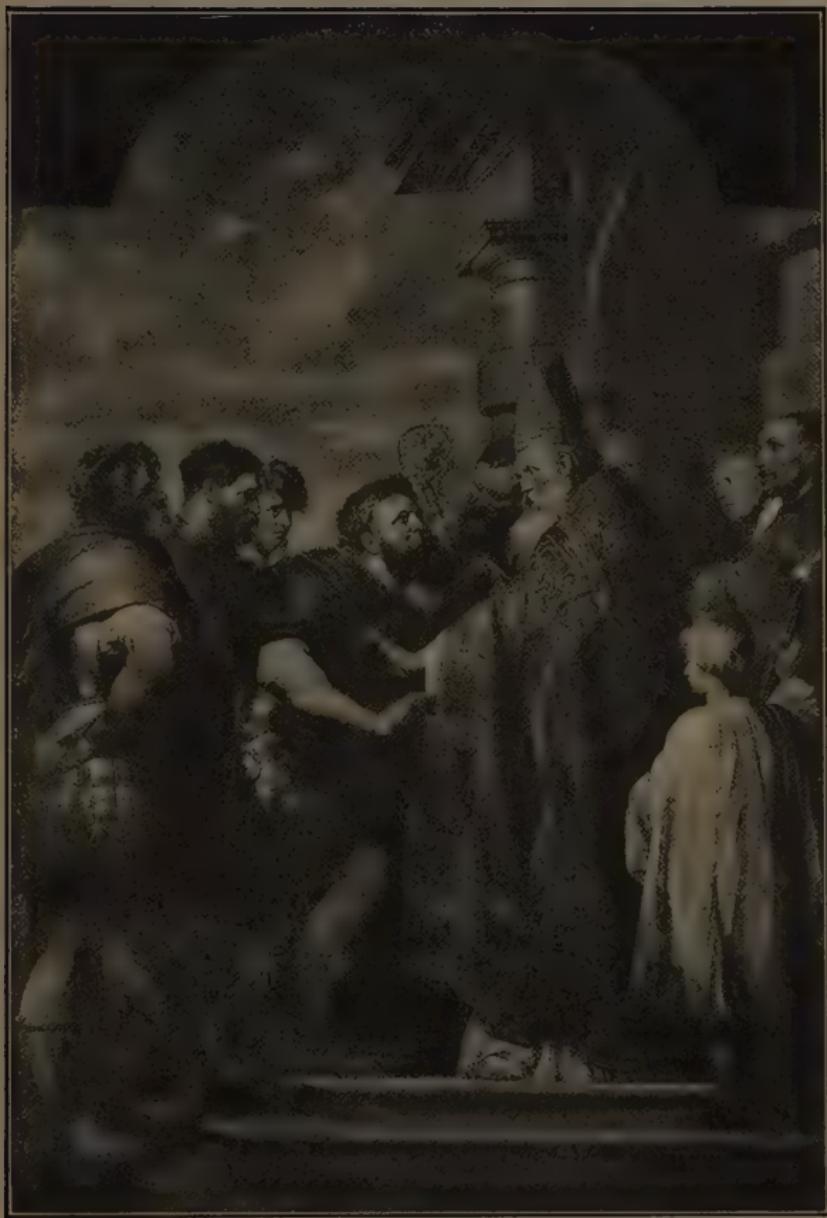
of theology ; (5) St. Gregory of Nyssa, brother of St. Basil of Cæsarea ; (6) St. John Chrysostom (golden-mouthed), Bishop of Constantinople. He laboured to put a stop to the wickedness of the people, and especially of the members of the



ST. BASIL.
(Herrera.)

Imperial Court. The Empress Eudoxia exiled him twice, but the second time he died before he reached his destination, A.D. 407.

During the fifth century the most illustrious



Haufstaengl Photo.

ST. AMBROSE REBUKES THEODOSIUS.

(*Rubens.*)

Father of the East was St. Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria.

Western Fathers.

Fourth century.

In the West the Church was defended by (1) St. Hilary of Poictiers, surnamed the "Athanasius of the West," because of his zeal against the Arians in Gaul; and (2) St. Ambrose, who was renowned for his eloquence, and for his firmness in punishing the Emperor Theodosius the Great for causing the inhabitants of Thessalonica to be massacred.

Fifth century.

During the fifth century the most celebrated Fathers of the Western Church were (1) St. Jerome, (2) St. Augustine, and (3) St. Leo the Great, all of whom, as we have seen, laboured incessantly to put a stop to different heresies, which endangered the faith of the people.

The title
"Doctor of
the Church."

For the Church to bestow the title of "Doctor" on any of its members she requires: (1) that he should be very learned in all matters concerning religion, so as to be able to teach others; (2) he must be eminently holy; (3) the title must be confirmed by the Pope or by a General Council. Four doctors of the Church are named in Canon law—St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and St. Gregory the Great. Among those whose titles have been confirmed by the Pope are St. Chrysostom, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Basil, St. Athanasius, St. Hilary, and the two SS. Cyril. Thus we see that some of these great saints have merited the title of Father and Doctor of the Church. The



Anderson Photo.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

(*Murillo.*)

The title
“Father of
the Church.”

term “Father” was in early times given to all bishops, but, later on, it came to mean only those writers whose works were of sound doctrine and of great value in the Church, and who had led holy lives; and it is in this latter sense that we have used it.

III. RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE EARLY AGES.

Origin of
religious life.

Even in the time of the Apostles we hear of holy men and women who, to imitate more closely the lives of our Blessed Lord and His Holy Mother, consecrated themselves to the service of God and of their neighbour. St. Paul makes special mention of holy women who were thus spending all their time in prayer and good works.

First
religious.

These widows and deaconesses, as they were then called, lived in their own homes, and served the churches and the poor. St. Agnes, St. Cecilia, St. Dorothea, and St. Agatha were all consecrated virgins living in the world, but spending their lives in good works.

Anchorites.

A little later on, in order to be more free from worldly cares, a great number of Christians withdrew into solitary life—that is, they lived each in a separate cell near some town or village, and very often close to a church. They were called anchorites, and for many ages, even when monasteries and convents were founded, numbers of people, both men and women, still embraced this kind of life. In England, for instance, there were

ST. PAUL AND ST. ANTONY.
(Velasquez.)



anchorites up to the time of the so-called Reformation.

Hermits.

When during the seventh persecution Christians were no longer free to exercise their religion, great numbers fled into the deserts—principally of Egypt—either to give themselves entirely to God, or to escape the fierce pains of the tortures prepared for those Christians who were taken before the judges. These settlers in the desert were the hermits. The most famous was St. Paul of Thebes, the first hermit. He retired into the desert when very young, in the year A.D. 249. For nearly a hundred years he was fed by a raven which brought him half a loaf daily. Just before his death he was discovered by St. Antony, the patriarch of monks. This saint had also been a hermit, but so many came to him for help and guidance that a town of solitaries grew up around him. About the same time many other towns and villages of hermits were thus commenced. Such a community was called a “Laura.” It consisted of hundreds of little cells at some distance from each other, but not very far from a church where all could meet for Holy Mass.

Hermit-towns,
or Lauræ.

First monasteries and convents.

A little later, instead of having separate cells at a distance from one another, the hermits formed into communities, living together under a Superior. Thus was commenced religious life as we see it now. The Thebaid, or Upper Valley of the Nile, was the home of these monks and nuns. The men lived in monasteries, the women in convents, following a settled rule of life. The first rule was

drawn up by St. Pachomius. The religious spent a great deal of their time in prayer and in hard work. They observed strict poverty, both as to food and clothing, but they strove chiefly to excel in obedience and charity. Before St. Pachomius died, seven thousand monks acknowledged him as their superior.

The movement which had commenced in Africa soon spread into other parts of the Church. St. Hilarion introduced it into the East. St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome all founded convents or monasteries. It was St. Basil who gave the final perfection to religious congregations by causing the members to take vows with the sanction of the bishop. In France St. Martin of Tours was the great apostle of religious life. His rule was carried into Ireland by St. Patrick.

Spread of
monasticism.





ORNAMENT ON LEATHER FROM COVER OF CELTIC BOOK.

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIANITY IN THE BRITISH ISLES

I. SOUTH BRITAIN.

Religion of
Britons.

Druidism.

Temples.

In the days when Julius Cæsar at the head of his victorious Roman legions invaded our country, fifty-five years before the birth of our Lord, he found the ancient Britons practising a strange form of religion, called Druidism. It was so called from its priests, the Druids, a very numerous and important body of men.

They built no temples, but worshipped their gods in the open air, under groves of oaks. If, as is generally believed, they also constructed circles of massive stones, it is uncertain whether it was for worship or in honour of the dead. The most remarkable of these monuments are to be seen at Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain, and at Avebury, in Wiltshire.

Their worship consisted in offering sacrifices, Worship. generally of animals, but in times of need or in war they would offer a man, woman, or child, whom they enclosed in a wicker cage shaped like a human being, and whom they consumed in a vast fire. They also prayed to their gods and sang hymns, and kept festivals in honour of the sun and moon, and venerated the mistletoe, which was solemnly cut down with a golden sickle during one of their great yearly festivals.

The priests, or Druids, were so learned that Druids. young men, even from distant places, were sent to Britain to be trained by them. They had no books, but all their learning was put into verse, and taught by rote. This training sometimes lasted from fifteen to twenty years.

The people were taught that there were many Doctrine. gods, but the Druids themselves knew that there was one only God, who would reward the good, and punish the wicked for all eternity. But a better time was coming for the poor Britons, who were a brave and simple people, loving their island home very dearly. Their country was invaded by the Romans. The Britons fought hard and suffered a great deal rather than let themselves be conquered. In spite, however, of their courageous defence, the Romans succeeded in making Britain a province of the Empire. Though this seemed a misfortune to the Britons, it was the means of bringing them the greatest of blessings—the true faith.

How and when Christianity was first preached

Rome
conquers
Britain.

Christianity
preached
in Britain.

Legendary
accounts.

in our island is uncertain. Old traditions say that St. Peter and St. Paul came to Britain, but it is more probable that among the Roman soldiers were to be found many Christians, and they will have helped to convert the poor people among whom they found themselves. But, as we have seen, there are many legends about the first apostles of the faith in Britain. One old legend tells us that St. Joseph of Arimathea came to Glastonbury soon after the Ascension, and that it was winter when he began to preach to the people. They would not listen at first, so he struck his staff into the ground, begging God to show by a miracle that he taught the true faith. The staff immediately took root, put forth branches, green leaves, and flowers whiter than the snow around. This miracle converted the simple people, and a little straw-roofed church was built and dedicated to our Lady, the first in the country which was so soon to become the Isle of Saints and to deserve the name of the Dower of Mary. Later on a fine church and monastery were built at Glastonbury, and this, the mother of churches, or the Second Rome, as it was called, became the most famous shrine in the West of England, the only one that was not destroyed when the Saxons came.

St. Bede says that when St. Eleutherius was Pope, between A.D. 182-193, a British chief called Lucius, grandson of Caractacus, and prince over a small kingdom in Wales, sent messengers to ask the Pope for Christian teachers. The Pope gladly received them, and sent two holy missionaries,

SS. Fugatius and Damian. The two envoys themselves seem to have returned some time after as bishops, and to have helped to convert their native land. The faith spread very rapidly. We soon after hear of several dioceses having been founded, and Tertullian, who wrote quite at the beginning of the third century, speaks of our island having received the faith in places inaccessible to Roman arms.

Though Britain was a province of the Roman Empire, the British Christians seem to have been left in peace during the terrible days of persecution. Only during the tenth century do we hear of martyrs suffering for the faith. In spite of the favour shown to the faithful by Constantius Chlorus (the Imperial Cæsar, and father of Constantine the Great), the edicts of Diocletian were put in force in Britain. Many martyrs gave up their lives rather than deny their faith. We are told of thousands having been martyred in Wales, but the most famous is St. Alban, the protomartyr of Britain.

He was a noble pagan of Verulam, and when a holy priest, named Amphibalus, was fleeing from the persecutors, he generously hid him in his house. Some days passed, and Alban, struck by the sanctity of his guest, asked for and received holy baptism. By this time the soldiers had found out where St. Amphibalus was, and presented themselves at St. Alban's house. To save the priest, St. Alban changed clothes with him, and let himself be taken before the Roman governor, who at

Conversion
of Britons.

The
persecutions.

St. Alban,
Britain's first
martyr,
A.D. 304.

once saw the mistake of his men. He was offering sacrifice at the time, and he ordered St. Alban to join him in the ceremony. On the saint's refusal, the judge commanded him to be cruelly scourged, but as this did not shake his constancy, he condemned St. Alban to be beheaded at once on the top of a neighbouring hill. Crowds pressed on to see the martyrdom, and as all had to pass a bridge over a little stream, the Saint feared lest the throng should prevent his receiving his crown before nightfall. So

*Anderson Photo.*

ST. GEORGE, PROTECTOR OF ENGLAND.

(Mantegna.)

Time and place of martyrdom uncertain.

he prayed that the hour of his triumph might not be delayed, and immediately a passage opened

through the waters, which stood up like walls on either side. The soldier who was to have executed him was converted, and on St. Alban's praying again, a spring burst forth at his feet. He baptized the soldier, and a few moments later both attained the glory of martyrdom.

So many miracles followed that the governor gave orders that the persecution should cease. A famous monastery was built on the spot, and the town of St. Albans grew up around it.

During the years of peace which followed the Britain becomes a Christian land.
triumph of Constantine, whose mother, St. Helena, is thought to have been a Briton, the faith soon became the only religion in the land. Old chronicles tell of the churches built in honour of saints and martyrs, of numerous monasteries of monks and nuns. Besides which we hear of British bishops taking part in the great Councils of the Church. Thus some were present at the Council of Arles, A.D. 314, against the Donatists; and again at Sardica, A.D. 347, where St. Athanasius tells us that British bishops were amongst those who defended the true faith against the Arians.

But now evil days were in store for Britain. Towards the end of the fourth century the Picts and Scots frequently passed the great wall built by the Romans to keep them in the north of Caledonia (Scotland), and invaded the southern or Roman part of the island. At first the Romans helped to drive them back, but as time went on barbarian tribes began to invade the Roman Empire in other places, and as they pressed on closer and closer to

Romans withdraw from Britain, A.D. 410.

Rome itself, the Romans called home their soldiers from the distant provinces. The helpless Britons in vain begged them to come back. Beyond fortifying the great walls, the Romans did nothing to aid them. Continued invasions, quarrels among the British chiefs, and other evils gradually brought the country into a very sad state, and in many places religion suffered greatly.

Pelagius.
Heresy in
Britain,
A.D. 394.

Just at this time another terrible misfortune happened. We have seen that the Pelagian heresy was the work of a Briton, named Morgan,* who was living in Italy. The heresy found its way into Britain, and Pope Celestine I. sent St. Palladius to preach against it. Then SS. Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes, both Gaulish bishops, were asked to come and help the British bishops against the growing evil. The Pope sanctioned the mission, and the two saints, accompanied by St. Patrick, who was at this time a priest at Auxerre, traversed the country, preaching in the towns, villages, and even in the open fields. They strengthened the faith of many and converted great numbers from heresy.

Pelagianism
overthrown.

At the end of one famous conference, a blind girl was brought to St. Germanus to be healed. He bade them present her to the Pelagian bishops, who refused to do anything. St. Germanus then laid on the child's eyes a reliquary he always wore, and her sight was immediately restored. No greater proof could have been given of which side held the

* Morgan signifies "born by the sea." The Greek form of the name is Pelagius.

true faith of Christ, and Pelagianism was completely overthrown.

St. Germanus remained some time to instruct the people, who had been getting very ignorant and careless in religious matters. Finding many without baptism, he had spent the whole Lent preparing them, and on Holy Saturday he admin-

The coming
of the Picts
and Scots.



ST. PATRICK AND CONTEMPORARY SAINTS.

(Flandrin.)

istered the Sacrament with great solemnity. While the new converts were still clad in their white robes, news was brought that the Picts and Scots were upon them. St. Germanus, who had been a famous soldier in his youth, promised to lead the Britons to victory. They had no arms, and knew nothing of fighting, but they trusted to the Saint.

Battle of
Alleluia,
A.D. 429.

He led them all into a deep hollow valley which the invaders had to cross, and bade them remain silent and hidden. Just as the enemy advanced, suspecting nothing, St. Germanus gave the signal, the priests cried aloud “Alleluia!” and the people responded with a mighty shout, which was re-echoed from all the surrounding hills. The terrified invaders thought a great army was in ambush, and fled as fast as their feet could carry them, throwing away all their spoils, which strewed the plain. This bloodless victory is called in old chronicles the “Battle of Alleluia.”

St. Germanus having thus conquered the enemies of Britain, both spiritual and temporal, returned to Gaul, but his memory remained dear in the country for many a long year to come, and many churches were dedicated in his honour.

In spite of this victory, the Picts, Scots, and other invading tribes returned again and again, and did great mischief. Such numbers of Britons left their homes and settled in Armorica, a province of Gaul, that they gave the name of Brittany to the country. The Bretons to this day venerate the ancient British saints who founded the Church in their land.

St. Ursula
and her
companions.

One of the Armorican princes asked for the hand of Ursula, a British princess, in marriage. She set out with a train of maidens and attendants, but their ships were driven by storm into the mouth of the Rhine. Near Cologne, they were met by one of the bands of Huns which were desolating the Roman Empire, and all were

Renewed
invasions,
A.D. 450.

massacred for their faith. In the ancient church of St. Ursula at Cologne are preserved the relics of the Saint and her company of virgin martyrs.

It was about this time that the Britons asked the Saxon pirates to help them against their
Britons seek foreign aid.



Hans Memling Photo.

MARTYRDOM OF ST. URSULA.

(Memling.)

enemies. As we know, this led to greater disasters. When the Picts and Scots were driven out, the Saxons took for themselves the lands they had helped the Britons to regain, and the poor Britons

themselves were forced to flee to the western and hilly parts of the island. Thus Cornwall, Wales, and parts of Lancashire were the only British provinces remaining; all the rest gradually became the possession of Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. All these tribes were idolaters. They enslaved the few Britons who remained, and in a short time the Christian faith was forgotten, and pagan worship again reigned in the land.

The Church
survives in
the west.

But the Church still flourished in the parts where the Britons dwelt. Many famous monasteries were founded during the next hundred and fifty years, and many saints made the land glorious. St. David, patron of Wales, and St. Winifred, whose well is still famous for miracles, were among those canonized.

II. NORTH BRITAIN CONVERTED.

What
tradition
says.

There is an old tradition in Scotland that, late in the second century, one of the chieftains, named Donald, sent to Pope St. Victor for missionaries, and that two were sent to preach to the people, many of whom became Christians. Again, in A.D. 369, St. Regulus is said to have brought relics of St. Andrew to Abernethy. But very little is known of what went on in Scotland during these far-off centuries.

What history
says.

About the beginning of the fifth century the story becomes clearer. In the land now called Scotland there were three different peoples. Britons dwelt in the southern part, which stretched



ST. ANDREW, PATRON OF SCOTLAND.

(Carlo Dolci.)

The Saint, about to be crucified, falls on his knees, exclaiming, "O good Cross!"

from Antonine's wall down to that of Hadrian. This formed the Roman province of Valencia. Among these people, as in most countries where the Romans had settled, the faith had spread rapidly, and we hear of churches, and priests, and Christian families in the stories of Saints like St. Ninian, who came from this part of the land. In Caledonia, the northern half of Scotland, were the Picts, who lived on the broad, fertile plain between the wall of Antonine and the Grampians; and, lastly, the Scots, who lived still further north among the mountains. Both these peoples were wild and warlike, and, as far as we know, no apostle had preached the faith to them before the end of the fourth century.

St. Ninian,
Apostle of
Picts.

It was in A.D. 397 that Pope St. Siricius sent St. Ninian to preach to the Picts. This saint was the son of a British prince who lived on the Solway Firth. He was a Christian from his birth, and, while still very young, showed great signs of holiness, being very fond of passing hours in prayer in the churches. When old enough, he went to Rome, and, after years of study and preparation, he became a priest. Still he continued in Rome, spending his time in prayer and good works, till at length the time came when God called him back to his own land to labour for the conversion of those among his countrymen who had not as yet received the true faith. Pope St. Siricius himself consecrated him Bishop when he was thirty-six years of age, and bade him preach to the still pagan Picts.

On his way, St. Ninian passed through Tours, where the great St. Martin was bishop, and where St. Patrick was at that time a monk. St. Ninian spent some time with the two saints, and, when leaving, took with him from Tours some skilled workmen to build churches in Scotland, when it should be converted. St. Ninian preached and laboured with great success among the Picts. He brought the prince to the true faith, and with him a great number of his subjects. Then he set about building a fine stone church and monastery at Whithorn, in Galloway. This was a strange sight to the people who had never seen any but wooden buildings, and they called it the White House.

For more than thirty years St. Ninian laboured among the Picts, and great numbers embraced the true faith. He died A.D. 432, and was buried in his own cathedral.

While St. Ninian was preaching in Scotland, St. Palladius was trying to convert the Irish. But he had little success, and he crossed over to Scotland about the time that St. Ninian died. He continued the good work so well begun, and for twenty years more he preached among the Picts. Before he died the faith had spread so far that he was able to consecrate two bishops, St. Ternan for the southern people, the Picts, and St. Servanus for the Orkneys and northern tribes, or the Scots. But the conversion of the Scots was the work of St. Columba, an Irish monk, whose story belongs to the next century.

Mission of
St. Ninian.



ST. PATRICK TRAVERSING IRELAND.

III. CONVERSION OF IRELAND.

While Christian Britain was being transformed into pagan England, Ireland was being won to the faith. The Romans had never landed there, and in the fifth century the Irish were still pagans. The great St. Patrick was to win them to the true faith. While still a boy, he was carried off by Irish pirates from his home, either in Brittany or in Scotland. He escaped after some years, and went to Gaul, to St. Martin of Tours, his uncle. Then he went to the famous monasteries of Marmoutier and Lerins, and, lastly, settled in the diocese of Auxerre, under the great St. Germanus, whom he accompanied to Britain in his mission against the Pelagians. St. Palladius, who had also been sent by the Pope on the same work, had gone on to Ireland to try and convert the people, but he had failed. Ever since his captivity, St. Patrick had yearned to preach the faith to the Irish. At last his prayer was heard, and Pope Celestine sent him to preach in Ireland, about A.D. 432. Within five years of his arrival, so great had been his success, that most of the chieftains and their peoples had been converted. St. Patrick founded monasteries for monks and nuns, built churches, trained up learned priests, and divided the whole land into dioceses, and placed them under bishops he himself had won to the faith. He was greatly assisted in his apostolic labours by the example and teaching of the holy virgin

Youth of
St. Patrick.
Mission of
St. Patrick,
A.D. 432.

St. Bridget, who is regarded as the foundress of religious communities of women in Ireland. So completely did this great Saint do his work of conversion that to this day Ireland has always been Catholic. The Irish rightly hold their faith their greatest treasure, and, in spite of all the terrible sufferings which they have endured for religion during succeeding ages, they are still true to the faith taught them by their glorious apostle.



CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE

CENTURY.	DATE A.D.	EVENTS.
FIRST.	31 51 64 70 95	Ascension. Council of the Apostles. First persecution † SS. Peter and Paul. Destruction of Jerusalem. Second persecution.
SECOND.	106 161 202	Third persecution † St. Simon—St. Ignatius of Antioch. Fourth persecution † St. Felicitas and her seven sons— “Thundering Legion.” Fifth persecution † St. Perpetua—Martyrs of Lyons.
THIRD.	235 249 257 274	Sixth persecution † chiefly Popes and clergy. Seventh persecution † Great multitudes. Eighth persecution † SS. Cyprian, Sixtus, Lawrence. Ninth persecution † St. Dionysius of Paris. Theban Legion. St. Sebastian.
FOURTH.	303 312 325 363 373 381 397	Tenth persecution † St. Agnes—St. Alban. Triumph of Christianity through accession of Constantine. First General Council— Nicæa —Arian heresy. Death of Julian the Apostate. † St. Athanasius. Second General Council— First Constantinople — Macedonian heresy. † St. Ambrose.
FIFTH.	407 410 420 430 431 432 449 451 455 476 496	† St. John Chrysostom. Rome taken by Alaric the Visigoth. † St. Jerome, translator of Bible. † St. Augustine of Hippo. Third General Council— Ephesus —Nestorian heresy. St. Patrick in Ireland. Saxons land in Britain. Fourth General Council— Chalcedon —Eutychian heresy. Attila, the Hun, threatens Rome. Genseric the Vandal plunders Rome. Fall of West Roman Empire under Romulus Augustulus. Baptism of Clovis, King of the Franks.

† Means death of.

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